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ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka's primary education program is described in this study. Chapter One discusses the present system of education, providing a brief history of the development of the educational system, a discussion of legal provisions concerning education, an overview of the school structure, as well as discussions of educational administration, teacher training and curriculum development, and educational finance. Chapter Two explores the accessibility of education, giving particular attention to disadvantaged sections of the population. Chapter Three discusses the national policy and plan for universal primary education. Implications of universal primary education concerning teacher supply and facilities are pointed out. Chapter Four reports significant developments, such as the development of management capabilities for principals of schools, clustering of schools, replacement of education circuits with school zones, multi-zone management and supervision, national assessments of education progress, implementation of literacy centers, quality improvement in primary education, initiatives of the National Institute of Education, and use of computers for data processing and program control. (RH)

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Asian Programme of Educational Innovation for Development

ED274457

Towards Universalization of Primary Education in Asia and the Pacific

Country Studies

SRI LANKA

PS 016081

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This volume is one of a series of National studies of the progress being made towards the universalization of primary education undertaken by the following Member States:

Bangladesh	Papua New Guinea
China	Philippines
India	Republic of Korea
Indonesia	Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
Nepal	Sri Lanka
Pakistan	Thailand

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Preface

Universalization of primary education (UPE) is one of the major priority goals of countries in the region of Asia and the Pacific. The developing countries in particular, are now vigorously engaged in the formulation and implementation of policies, plans and programmes aimed at making adequate and suitable opportunities for primary education available as soon as possible for all children and young people.

In 1983, as part of a major project under the Asian Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID) on the Universalization of Education, 12 countries in the region undertook national studies. The national studies were conducted to analyse the stage reached by the countries in UPE, and the problems encountered by them in providing educational opportunities to all children at the primary level; to review significant new and current developments in programmes and projects which the countries have undertaken in order to expand and improve primary education; and to contribute to achieving the target of primary education for all children. The studies were conducted by national institutes and professional groups under the guidance of high level committees of the Ministries of Education in the respective countries.

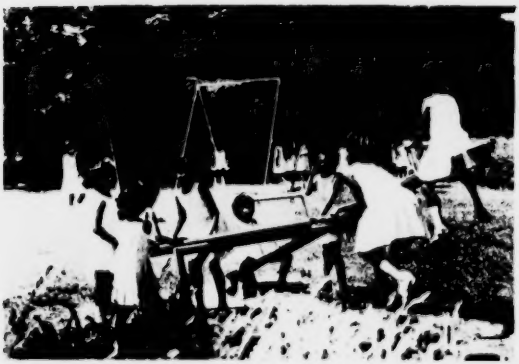
On completion of the national studies, a Regional Review Meeting was held in November 1983 which undertook an in-depth analysis of the methodologies of the national studies and examined their findings. The meeting also made suggestions for improving and updating the national studies tabled for review.

Following the recommendations of the review meeting, study teams in the participating countries have revised and updated the national studies. The present publication is an outcome of the collaborative and co-operative efforts of the member countries in understanding the progress made in the universalization of primary education, the nature and extent of problems and issues and their implications for achieving UPE in the region before the end of this century.

This series which provides a comparative view of the position of and progress made in UPE has been published with the view that the countries in the region, in their bid to step up measures for UPE, will find the information, experiences and conclusions useful in pursuing the goal of 'education for all' with a new vigor by drawing on the experiences of other countries with the same goals and objectives.

Children at a pre-school run by a private organization

A primary class at work



Playtime–primary children

Children enjoying the mid-day snack in an urban school

A child serving kola kanda (herbal porridge) in a rural school

A literacy class for non-school going children

Photographs supplied by courtesy of
Sri Lanka National Commission for Unesco

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Chapter One

PRESENT SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Sri Lanka is an island in the Indian Ocean situated between the northern latitudes 5° 55' and 9° 50' and the eastern longitudes 79° 42' and 81° 52'. It is separated from the Indian subcontinent by the Palk Straight. The island has a land area of 65,000 sq km. Its greatest length is 432 km and its greatest width is 224 km. The land consists of a low-lying coastal plain and an upland belt which rises to merge in the Central Highlands.

The country has preserved its national and cultural identity for over twenty-five centuries in its recorded history which stretches from the sixth century BC to the present day. The extensive ruins of ancient buildings and the vast network of man-made lakes and canals stand as a monument to a great civilization that flourished around the ancient capital cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa. Foreign invasions and internal strife combined with the outbreak of epidemics to cause the abandonment of those centres of pristine civilization. The beginning of the sixteenth century witnessed the onset of European powers and finally the British succeeded in capturing the whole island in 1815.

The political and social changes ushered in under British rule paved the way for the emergence of a political democracy. Through a gradual process of constitutional reforms the representatives of the people were trained in self-government and when independence was granted in 1948 the country was ready for a smooth transfer of power to the people.

The Sri Lankan nation is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. The total population according to the census of 1981 is 14.58 million. Sinhalese, the principal ethnic group, comprises 74 per cent, the Sri Lanka Tamils 12.6 per cent, the Muslims 7.1 per cent, the Indian Tamils 5.6 per cent and others 0.7 per cent. Buddhists Comprise 69.32 per cent, Hindus 15.5 per cent, Christians 7.5 per cent, Muslims 7.6 per cent and others 0.1 per cent.

After gaining independence, Sri Lanka has had to face (as in the case of other developing countries) many problems. Although the country has a low per capita income of $US 250 and is grappling with the problems of economic development, its achievements in the field of social development are outstanding. It has a literacy rate of 86 per cent, infant mortality rate of 38 per 1000, death rate of 6 per 1000 and life expectancy of 67 years. The population growth rate has come down to 1.5 per cent. These are significant achievements for a developing country.

Brief history of the development of the educational system. The beginnings of the educational system of Sri Lanka can be traced back to the introduction of Buddhism into the country in the third century BC. From that time until the advent of the Western powers in the sixteenth century the centres of learning were the Buddhist temples where the monks learned the Buddhist doctrine and laymen were taught letters and the reading of Buddhist scriptures. Some of these monastic establishments developed into great centres of oriental learning. In addition to the Buddhist doctrine, they also fostered secular learning which embraced such disciplines as poetics, medicine and engineering. The engineering feats exemplified by the vast lakes and the network of irrigation canals and the ruins of ancient buildings are proof of an advanced technology. These monastic institutions ably fulfilled their obligations as centres of learning under the stimulus of royal patronage. The advent of European powers caused a gradual erosion of the traditional education base of the country.

Many of the characteristics of the school system as it exists today are the result of the educational activities of the succeeding European colonial powers. The Portuguese who ruled the maritime provinces from 1505 to 1658 established schools mainly for the purpose of converting the local population to Roman Catholicism. The Dutch who followed the Portuguese (1658 to 1796) reorganized and extended the school system with the same objective of proselytization. The British who succeeded the Dutch in 1796 continued with the same policy in the early phase of their rule.

After they gained control of the whole island and unified the administration, there arose the need to train local personnel for the lower rungs of the administrative hierarchy. The government therefore encouraged the establishment of schools taught in the English

language. The arrival of Anglican and other missionaries also gave an impetus to the establishment of schools. In 1869 the Department of Public Instruction was established for the purpose of managing government schools and the expansion of educational provision. The missionary societies continued to establish English schools and there emerged a dual system: English language schools with qualified teachers and superior facilities which charged fees and catered to the upper classes, and vernacular schools which imparted free education to the children of the poor classes. Although some headway was made in the establishment of schools, "three-fourths of the children of school-going-age were not attending schools."[1]

The Town Schools Ordinance of 1906 and the Rural Schools Ordinance of 1907 intended to provide compulsory education for children between the ages of six and twelve years with some exceptions. These Ordinances entrusted the provision of vernacular education to local bodies. It is significant that these two Ordinances were the first attempts to introduce compulsory education, though the progress achieved was "poor, tardy and unsatisfactory."[2]

The introduction of universal adult franchise and the grant of internal self-government under the constitutional reforms of 1931 brought the issue of education to the forefront. An elected representative of the people became the chairman of the Executive Committee on Education in the State Council and assumed responsibility for education as the minister-in-charge of the subject.

The educational policies implemented during the 1930s and 1940s constitute a high-water mark in the process of democratization of education in Sri Lanka. The Education Ordinance of 1939, which still constitutes the greater part of the educational law, attempted to introduce an element of control over the assisted schools run by the denominational bodies. The establishment of central schools and junior schools provided facilities for rural children to obtain an education equivalent to that imparted by the elite schools in the urban areas. A scheme of scholarships enabled children from poor families to gain access to better education. The decision to

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1 *Education in Ceylon – A Centenary Volume Part II.* Colombo, Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, 1969. p. 460.

2 *Education in Ceylon – A Centenary Volume Part II.* Colombo, Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, 1969. p. 504.

accept the principle of "Free education from the kindergarten to the university" as national policy broke down the exclusiveness of assisted English schools and opened the doors of secondary and tertiary education to talented pupils from poor homes. Finally the adoption of mother tongue as the medium of instruction set in motion a trend of events which in the succeeding decades broke down the barriers of language for social advancement.

After gaining independence in 1948 successive governments continued with the policy of democratization of educational provision. The progressive increase in enrolment of pupils in schools and the rise in literacy indicate the achievements in this field. The following table on the percentage of literates shows the significant progress made in this sphere:

Year	*Males*	*Females*	*Average*
1901	42.0	8.0	26.4
1911	47.2	12.5	31.0
1921	56.4	21.2	39.9
1946	70.1	43.8	57.8
1953	80.7	69.0	75.5
1963	85.6	67.3	76.9
1971	85.6	70.9	78.5
1981	90.5	82.4	86.5

Source. Department of Census and Statistics.

Until 1960 the state schools and state-aided private schools continued to exist side-by-side resulting in a duality of control in the educational system. This dualism operated to the disadvantage of the poor: "The combined effect of these dualities was that educational provision was unplanned, unevenly distributed, wasteful of human and financial resources and that above all access to a quality education was by and large denied to the mass of the rural population and the urban poor."[3] With the take-over of assisted schools for state management in 1960 this duality of control in education was also done away with.

[3] Jayasuriya, J. E. *Education in the Third World: Some Reflections.* Indian Institute of Education, 1981. p 82.

In the 1960s government expenditure on education reached a very high level. It averaged 4.5 per cent of the GNP and 16 to 20 per cent of the annual government budget. Much of this expenditure was incurred on the payment of salaries to the teaching staff and provision of building facilities. But a small percentage was used for quality improvement, e.g., preparation of curriculum material and in-service training of teachers. The extension of science teaching to a large number of rural schools during this period could be described as an attempt to meet the social demand for equality of educational opportunities.

Quantitative expansion of education without a parallel thrust to align the system with the socio-economic needs of the country resulted in a relatively high incidence of educated unemployment. The system's output mainly prepared students for white collar jobs and administrative careers, far exceeding the demand of the economy. The educational reforms introduced in the early part of the 1970s gave "first priority to the task of formulating a new structure that will be well fitted to the needs of the country over the years ahead."[4] These reforms introduced an 'integrated' curriculum laying emphasis on pupil participation and activity-based learning in the primary grades and a common curriculum including science, mathematics and pre-vocational subjects in the junior secondary grades.

Certain modifications in the system, particularly with regard to the grade structure of the school system, was introduced in 1978. The supply of free school books is another progressive step that helped to retain a larger number of pupils in the system. The importance of non-formal education as a means of providing vocational and technical training opportunities for school drop-outs as well as continuing education and personal fulfilment courses for adults was recognized and several projects were inaugurated to benefit the target population.

The legal provisions. The Constitution of Sri Lanka in its chapter on Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties, states that the state is pledged to establish in Sri Lanka a democratic socialist society of which one of the objectives is "The complete eradication of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons

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[4] *Medium Term Plan for the Development of Education 1973-1977.* Colombo, Ministry of Education, 1973. p. 2.

of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels."[5] Thus the principle of universal and compulsory education is enshrined in the Constitution.

The principle legislative enactment relating to education in the country is the Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939. This Ordinance empowers the Director of Education (now the Director General of Education) to execute and enforce the provisions of the Ordinance subject to the general direction and control of the Minister of Education. The Minister is also given the authority to make regulations for the purpose of giving effect to the principles and provisions of the Ordinance. Regulations known as the Code have been framed for regulating the management of both primary and secondary schools.

The Town Schools Ordinance of 1906 and the Rural Schools Ordinance of 1907 were the first pieces of legislation which provided the legal basis for compulsory education in Sri Lanka. The Town Schools Ordinance provided for local authorities to establish schools within their limits for the education of children in vernacular languages and empowered them to pass by-laws for the working of the Ordinance. The Rural Schools Ordinance created district school committees with government officials and school managers nominated by the authorities. These bodies were required to conduct surveys of schools and prepare schemes for the establishment of vernacular schools. The school districts were to be subdivided into school circles comprising a single village or a group of villages so that they could be served by a single school, the demarcation being effected in such a manner that children could be compelled to attend a school if they lived within a radius of three miles. The extensions to existing schools and new schools had to be approved by the Director of Public Instruction: "The government while accepting the principle of compulsory education and providing legislation for the purpose, apparently favoured a gradual approach."[6]

The Education Ordinance of 1920 consolidated the existing legislation and established the Office of the Director of Education.

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5 *The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka* (Colombo, Department of Government Printing, 1978).

6 *Education in Ceylon – A Centenary Volume Part II.* Colombo, Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, 1969.

The district committees under the old Ordinances were replaced by education district committees, which were entrusted with the function of enforcing the law relating to compulsory education and provision of school facilities. These committees were empowered to make by-laws requiring parents of children aged 6 to 14 years (6 to 10 years in the case of Muslim and Tamil girls) residing within a particular area to attend elementary schools.

The Ordinance of 1939 empowered the Executive Committee of Education (later the Minister of Education) to make the following regulations:

a) Appoint attendance officers to ensure compulsory attendance of children in schools;

b) Empower such officers to collect information regarding children not attending school;

c) Authorize attendance officers to visit the homes of children and verify information regarding children not attending school;

d) Specify areas where sufficient educational facilities have been provided for the enforcement of regulations;

e) Place responsibility with the parents of children aged 6 to 14 years (upper age limit was increased to 16 years in 1947) to send them to a school if available within a distance of two miles;

f) Determine the days and hours of school sessions; and

g) Impose penalties on parents for contravention of these regulations.

However, along with the above provisions, the Ordinance provided for so many exceptions and provisions that the Special Committee on Education 1943 commented, "Unfortunately the exceptions now granted defeat the very object of the law."[7] According to the Ordinance, no parent could be prosecuted if a school was not available within two miles of the child's residence.

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[7] *Sessional Paper No. VII of 1946.* Colombo, Government Press, 1946. p. 7.

In actual fact, regulations on compulsory education under the 1939 Ordinance were never framed. However the by-laws made under the Ordinances of 1907 and 1920 were not repealed by the new Ordinance and attendance officers appointed under these by-laws continued to carry on their functions of checking on enrolment and attendence of pupils. Parents who did not comply with the by-laws were prosecuted. There was also provision for harsh punishments such as whipping and sending to a certified school for children who were habitual offenders. Gradually the Department of Education fell in line with the thinking that school attendance should be encouraged as a habit by persuasion and not enforced by compulsion. Consequently the appointment of attendence officers was discontinued.

It has been stated that "the legislation for compulsory education in Ceylon in spite of certain inherent weaknesses has contributed in a large measure to the promotion of elementary education."[8] The steep rise in the participation rate and the literacy rate during this period supports this view.

The school structure. Prior to 1972 the school system had the following structure:

a) Primary level (grades I-V);

b) Middle level (grades VI-VIII);

c) Secondary – first cycle (grades IX-X); and

d) Secondary – second cycle (grades XI-XII).

At the end of grade VIII, pupils were grouped into three fields: arts, science or commerce. At the end of grade X they faced their first public examination: the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE 'O' Level) Examination. Entry into the senior secondary cycle depended on their performance at this examination. The senior secondary cycle prepared them for the next public examination: the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE 'A' Level) Examination. This was mainly a matriculation examination for the selection of students for admission to the university.

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[8] *Education in Ceylon – A Centenary Volume Part II.* Colombo, Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, 1969. p. 511.

The educational reforms of 1972 raised the age of admission to school from five years to six years and reduced the span of the primary and junior secondary cycles by one year. The reforms changed the school structure as follows:

a) Primary level (grades I-V);

b) Junior secondary level (grades VI-IX); and

c) Senior secondary level (grades X-XI).

The junior secondary level did away with the streaming of students and offered a common curriculum which included science, mathematics and pre-vocational studies. The National Certificate of General Education (NCGE) Examination which was held at the end of grade IX functioned as a selective mechanism for admitting pupils to the senior secondary cycle.

In 1978 these reforms were revoked to restore many of the features that were in existence prior to 1972. The age of admission was lowered to five years and the span of formal education was increased from 11 to 13 years. A year was added making a total of 13 grades (6 + 3 + 2 + 2). The system existing today has the structure indicated below:

a) Primary level (grades K-V (6 years));

b) Junior secondary level (grades VI-X (5 years)); and

c) Senior secondary level (grades XI-XII (2 years)).

Institutions providing general education can be classified as primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools. The majority of the junior secondary and senior secondary schools have primary grades. The grade spans of the three types of schools are as follows:

a) Primary school (grades K-V);

b) Junior school (grades K-X); and

c) Senior secondary school (grades K-XII or VI-XII).

This last category is again subdivided as follows:

a) 1A/1B Schools – Senior secondary schools with GCE 'A' Level science classes.

b) 1C Schools – Senior secondary schools with GCE 'A' Level arts/commerce classes.

The number of schools in the above categories as well as schools with primary grades are indicated below:

Status of school	*Description*	*No. of schools*	
		Total	*Percentage*
1A/1B	Senior secondary schools with GCE 'A' Level science classes	470	4.9
1C	Senior secondary schools with GCE 'A' Level arts/commerce	1383	14.5
2	Junior secondary schools	3754	39.5
3	Primary schools	3914	41.1
TOTAL		9521	100.0

Schools according to grades held – 1981

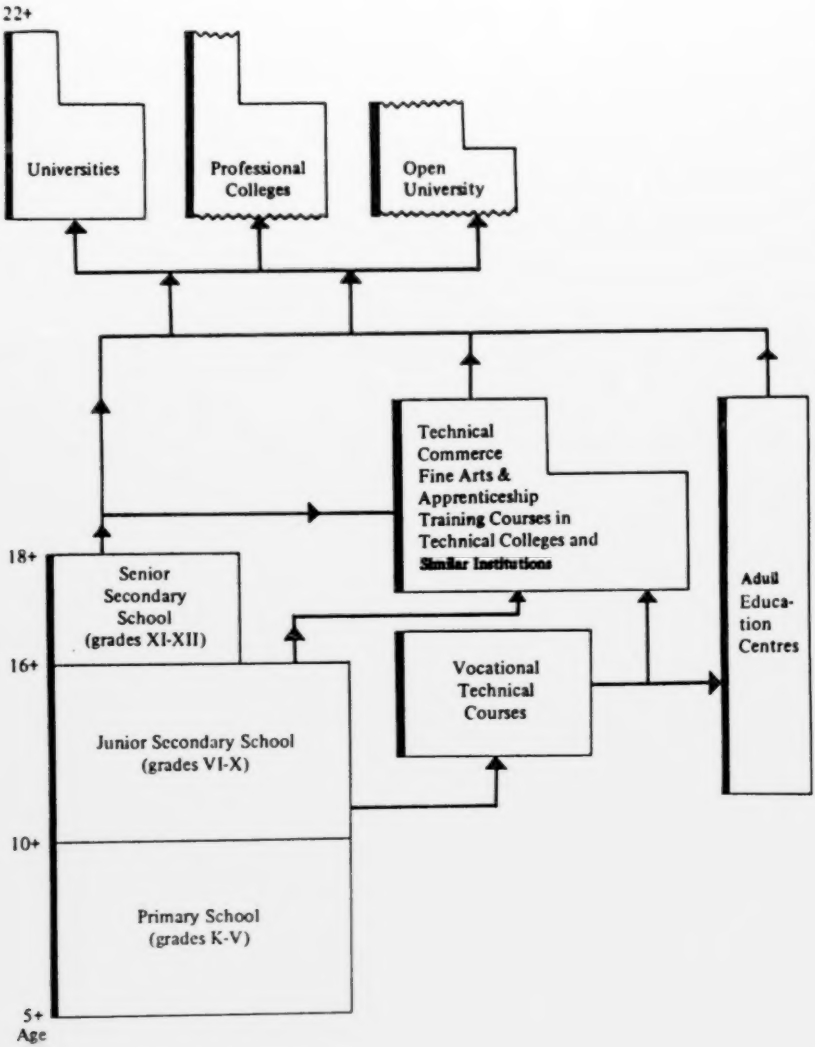
Grade span	*Grade*	*No. of schools*	
		Total	*Percentage*
Primary	K–V	3914	41.1
Primary and junior secondary	K–X	3754	39.4
Primary, junior secondary and senior secondary	K–XII	1471	15.4
Junior secondary and senior secondary	VI–XII	382	4.1
TOTAL		9521	100.0

Source: School Census – 1981.

Of the 9521 schools, 9139 or 96 per cent have primary grades. This is an indication of the spread of primary education facilities throughout the country. It also illustrates the difficulty of separately computing inputs such as staff, buildings, equipment and furniture needed for the primary cycle of education.

The size of schools varies from less than 50 pupils to over 4000 pupils. The small schools are situated mostly in the remote rural areas and the plantation districts while the large schools are situated in densely populated cities. The following table shows the distribution of schools by size:

EXISTING SYSTEM OF EDUCATION/TRAINING



Size of school		*No. of schools*	*Percentage*
1–50	Students	653	6.9
51–100	,,	1596	16.7
101–200	,,	2066	21.7
201–500	,,	3112	32.7
501–1000	,,	1519	16.0
1001–1500	,,	384	4.1
1501–2000	,,	110	1.1
over 2000	,,	81	0.8
TOTAL		9521	100.00

Source: School Census – 1981

A large number of schools in Sri Lanka are co-educational. But there are a few single-sex schools in the cities. Most of these are assisted schools established during the colonial era. Of the 9521 schools, 149 are boys' schools and 210 are girls' schools while 9162 or 96 per cent are mixed.

According to enrolment figures in the primary cycle male enrolment is slightly higher than female enrolment. However in the junior secondary and senior secondary cycles the females outnumber the males.

Enrolment in primary, junior secondary and senior secondary cycles by sex

Cycle	*Total enrolment*			*Percentage*	
	Male	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Primary	1,092,245	1,013,413	2,105,658	51.8	48.2
Junior secondary	522,906	539,412	1,062,318	49.2	50.8
Senior secondary	84,869	116,849	201,718	42.1	57.9
TOTAL	1,700,020	1,669,674	3,369,694	50.5	49.5

Source: School Census – 1981

The present school system in Sri Lanka can be described as mainly a state-controlled system. The system that existed during the colonial period was characterized by a dual management: the government system of schools and the assisted school system run by various religious denominations with government assistance. Following the take-over of the assisted schools in 1960 only 62 schools remain outside the state system. Of these 62 schools 25 schools receive financial assistance from the government for the payment of teachers' salaries. All schools have to follow the national policy on education as enunciated by the government.

There are other educational institutions called Pirivenas, which are run by the Buddhist clergy mainly for the purpose of imparting the training necessary for those aspiring to enter the Buddhist priesthood and the lay students over 14 years of age who wish to be trained in a religious atmosphere.

Some of these institutions are well known centres of oriental learning in the tradition of the ancient Buddhist institutes of learning. About 330 institutions are financially supported by the government.

The Education Ministry does not directly conduct pre-education centres. As the lower limit of school age is fixed at five years it is believed that the activity-based, environmentally-biased instruction given in the kindergarten is adequate preparation for formal education. However a large number of voluntary organizations and private individuals are engaged in running pre-school centres. In the rural areas the Sarvodaya Movement, the rural development societies and village development councils (Gramodaya Mandalayas) have organized such centres. In the plantation sector, such centres are organized by the state plantation co-operatives. The Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Social Services assist voluntary organizations to set up pre-school institutions. In the urban areas there are many efficiently-managed private nursery schools. Although the Education Ministry does not run pre-school institutions, the Ministry is exploring the possibility of providing facilities such as training of pre-school teachers and regulating management of pre-schools run by various organizations and individuals.

The adult education programmes were reorganized in the 1970s to meet the needs of out-of-school youths and adults in the country. A technical and vocational training programme for school

drop-outs was launched to train them in skills which would help them to enter the job market or establish self-employment. In 1978 a general adult education programme was started to provide life-enrichment courses for the adult population. Adult education officers were appointed on an electorate basis to organize this programme. In 1981 the Ministry organized literacy centres on a pilot basis to provide an alternative structure to the formal school with a view to realizing UPE. The non-formal education programmes have close linkages with the formal system and often use the resources of the formal system. Programmes such as literacy centres facilitate the re-entry of their clients into the formal system.

The universities and tertiary educational institutes are administered by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Educational administration

The central-level organization. The executive power under the constitution of Sri Lanka is vested in the President of the Republic and the ministers who are charged with the direction and control of ministries and departments under them. The ministers derive their executive power from the President. Thus the executive head of the Education Ministry is the Minister of Education who is assisted by a Deputy Minister and a Project Minister. The Secretary, subject to the general direction and control of the Minister of Education, is responsible for the effective implementation of educational policy and has supervision over all activities and functions of the Ministry as well as the departments and agencies under its control. The Secretary is assisted by other officials in implementing the educational policy of the government.

At the Ministry there are four additional secretaries who are responsible for providing staff services in the fields coming within their purview. For the purpose of implementation of policy the island is divided into four ranges and each Secretary, in addition to his staff functions, is vested with the responsibility of supervising one of the ranges. They are assisted by deputy directors-general of education, directors of education, the chief accountant, the director of school works, the senior assistant secretary, assistant secretaries, chief education officers and accountants. Two other institutions,

the Department of Examinations and the Department of Educational Publications, are headed by two commissioners.

The functions of the Ministry of Education Services include the provision of buildings, furniture, equipment, schoolbooks and midday meals to school children. The Secretary of Education Services is responsible for implementing the orders of the Project Ministry under the control and direction of the Project Minister.

An independent body known as the Education Service Committee under the direction of the Public Service Commission has been appointed by the President to discharge such functions as recruitment, promotion, deployment and disciplinary control of teachers and education service officers.

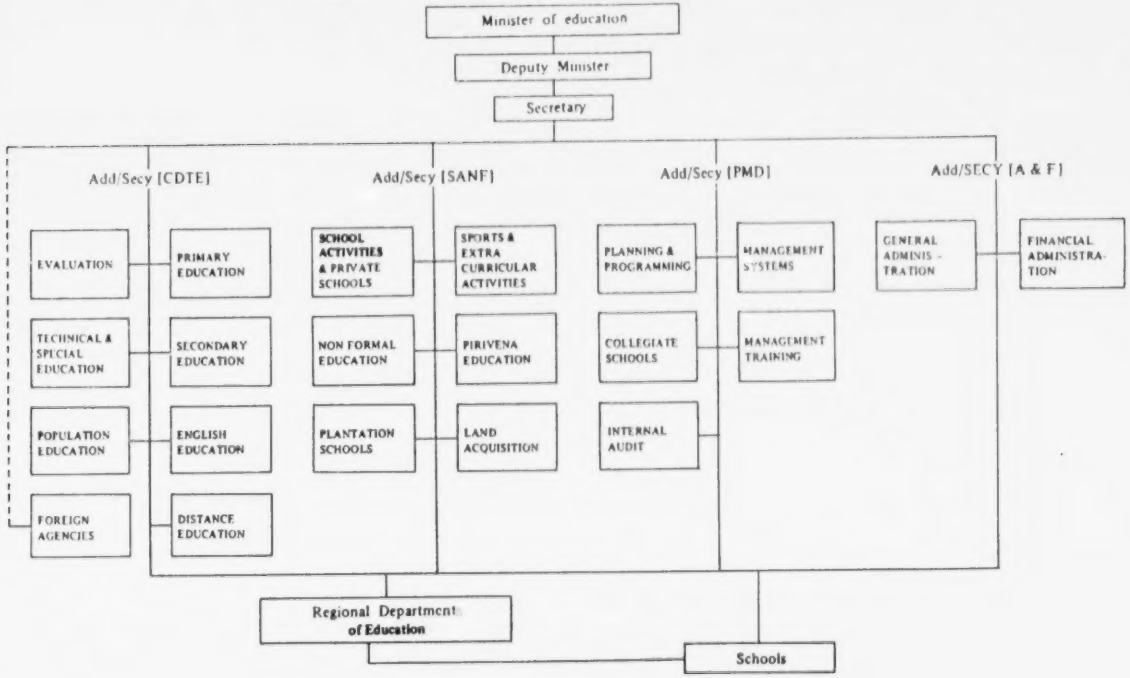
The district-level organization. The actual implementation of educational programmes is carried out by the regional departments of education. There are 24 such departments which co-exist with the administrative districts of the country. A regional department is managed by a regional director of education (RDE). The director is assisted by chief education officers, education officers, an accountant, a school works engineer and supervisors designated as circuit education officers. In large administrative districts where the number of schools and the school population are too large to be managed by one office, sub-offices have been established under chief education officers.

The work of the regional education departments is organized into five divisions, namely, educational administration, educational development, general administration, finance and school works (buildings). The RDE himself heads the Education Development Division, while being responsible for the efficient management of the whole regional department.

In regions where there are sub-offices, the RDE is responsible for the efficient management of the entire region inclusive of the areas under the sub-office. The chief education officer in charge of the sub-office and his staff in the sub-office form the RDE's supportive staff. The activities of the sub-office are confined to the three areas of general administration, finance and school works.

Each district is divided into several circuits which are more or less co-existent with the electorates. On the average each circuit

Organizational chart of the ministry of education



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consists of 30 to 40 schools. A circuit is in the charge of a circuit education officer whose main function is the supervision of schools in the circuit. He also functions as the link between the schools and the Regional Department of Education. In addition there are also specialist circuit education officers who are in charge of supervision of various subject areas such as science, agriculture, commerce, home science, physical education, art, music and dancing.

Planning of education. In Sri Lanka the general policy of the government is formulated on the basis of the manifesto of the political party in power, which has been endorsed by the majority of the people at the hustings. The executive policy which represents the will of the government is derived from this general policy, taking into consideration the realities and constraints operating at the time and the need to adopt a pragmatic approach. The executive policy in relation to education provides the objectives or the decisional premises for educational planning. Medium-term investment plans and the annual implementation programmes of the Ministry are worked out in the context of national policy and priorities. The educational planners have to create action paths for the purpose of making the educational system more efficient in achieving set targets within the framework of established objectives.

The Planning and Programming Branch of the Ministry is responsible for the planning and programming of education. The director is guided by the policy directives and resource allocations indicated in the Government Investment Plan. The annual implementation programmes are prepared on the basis of the programme activities of the different branches at the Ministry and the regional departments of education.

Educational planning at the regional level is of recent origin. According to a scheme prepared by the ministry the regional director of education is required to prepare a three-year rolling plan for the educational development of the region. When approved by the Minister of Education this plan will provide the basis for the preparation of the annual implementation plan.

As described in Chapter Four, each district will be divided into a number of school zones and education offices will be established to plan the development of these zones. The zonal plans will be synthesized into the three-year rolling district plan.

The head of the school is entrusted with the responsibility of drawing up the annual plan for his school. He is assisted in this task by the deputy principal, grade co-ordinators and subject co-ordinators. The effectiveness of planning at the different levels will depend on the nature and viability of the linkages between school-level and zonal planning on the one hand and between zonal and district-level planning on the other.

Administrative organization for primary education. At the central level, the Primary Education Branch of the Ministry is responsible for the overall planning and development of primary education under the guidance of the additional secretary. The Primary Education Curriculum Committee comprising the additional secretary, the director/primary education, the director/secondary education, chairpersons of sub-committees on different subject areas, the principal of a teachers' college and the principal of a primary school or a school with primary classes is responsible for designing curriculum content and methods of teaching. Sub-committees have been set up for language, mathematics, environmental studies and science, social studies, health and physical education, and aesthetics and creative activities. These sub-committees consist of subject specialists chosen from among officers in the educational service, teachers' college lecturers and primary school teachers. In addition to the preparation of curricular materials, the Primary Education Branch is responsible for the in-service training of primary teachers, supervision and evaluation, and action research in primary education.

The Curriculum Development Centre provides staff services to regional departments of education by supplying course guides and curriculum materials prepared at the Centre and organizing in-service training for supervising officers and master-teachers in the region. The regional director of education in turn is expected to see that all curriculum materials are distributed among the schools in his region and in-service training programmes are conducted for the teachers and heads of schools.

The function of educational supervision is carried out by the head of the school and his subject co-ordinators and by the regional director and his staff. The officers of the Curriculum Development Centre visit schools for the purpose of supervising teaching and obtaining information needed for evaluating curricular materials and

providing guidance to regional staff engaged in supervision. A system for supervision of primary schools is being prepared at the Centre by a team of educators comprising university lecturers, teachers' college lecturers, principals of schools and experienced primary teachers. The system will be used by the supervising officers to monitor more efficiently the progress of primary education.

Applications for the establishment of new schools are processed by the Regional School Structure Committee and sent to the Ministry School Structure Committee through the additional secretary-in-charge of the particular range. Decisions on such matters are taken after considering the number of non school-going children in the area, whether a primary school is available within a radius of two miles, the population density of the area and the geographical and topographical features of the area. Requests for the establishment of new schools come from regional directors and voluntary groups such as rural development societies and village development councils. Sometimes voluntary organizations donate land for the school and also offer to construct buildings. It is envisaged that in the future, the question of establishment of new schools will be adequately considered during the preparation of the zonal plan. Under the present integrated primary education programme the co-operation of the community is extended in several ways. The parents can become active contributors to classroom activities. They can share their talents, knowledge and skills with children who seek their assistance. The children go into the community seeking information about their environment and the community in turn is invited to the classroom. Some of the mothers who accompany their children to the school actively help the teacher to organize materials necessary for learning activities.

Through school development societies parents have contributed to improvement of infrastructural facilities. They have converted open school buildings into attractive primary classrooms. Most of the materials necessary for practical work have also been provided by the parents.

Teacher training and curriculum development

Teacher training. Until recently the minimum academic qualification required of persons aspiring to enter the teaching service was

the GCE 'O' level. The required qualification is now upgraded to include passing grades in three subjects at the GCE 'A' level. The new recruits to the service thus have a minimum of 12 years of formal schooling. As a sufficient number of persons with the requisite qualifications are available in the labour market, the supply is more than adequate to meet the demand.

After recruitment, the new teachers undergo a short course of training varying from two to three weeks in duration. The purpose of this training is to orientate the new recruits to their vocation. After a few years they are selected to undergo a course of training at a teachers' college.

Primary and secondary grades share resources in most schools. According to the school census the number of teachers working in primary grades is 61,192. There is a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:36. The general teacher-pupil ratio for the country is 1:23. The Ministry has stated that the class size in the primary grades should be 35 to 40, though this would depend on the total enrolment. In a large number of small schools one teacher has to handle a number of classes. The statistics relating to the number of female teachers in the primary grades are not available. Nearly 60 per cent of the teachers in both primary and secondary education are female. The present policy is to deploy female-trained teachers to teach in the lower primary grades. The ratio of female teachers to male teachers is higher in the primary cycle than in the secondary cycle. Data available on trainees in teachers' colleges indicates that the percentage of female teachers in primary education is 70 per cent.

There are difficulties in sending teachers to schools in remote areas. The Ministry gives preference to such schools in the matter of providing teachers' living quarters and other amenities. The Small Schools' Programme implemented with UNICEF assistance was an attempt to meet the basic needs of this category of schools.

Until recently the regulations of the Ministry of Education did not permit university graduates to teach in the primary grades. Currently this rule has been relaxed and 236 university graduates have now been trained to teach primary education with an integrated curriculum. A large proportion of university graduates recruited to the teaching service in the future will be deployed in primary education. This policy will increase the number of teachers having the

necessary experience and expertise to participate in research directed towards the improvement of primary education.

At present there are 16 training colleges where courses for primary school teachers are conducted. The annual total of graduates of these institutions is approximately 1,000. Figures indicate that 13,000 primary teachers are currently untrained. The policy of the Ministry is to introduce pre-service training and to clear this backlog within the shortest possible time. Accordingly the Ministry has formulated a scheme to provide a two- or three-year non-residential course for the training of teachers for elementary education. In addition to non-residential education methods, contact sessions will be held at district centres during week-ends and school vacations. The tutorial staff for these centres will be drawn mainly from among the lecturers of teachers' colleges.

The course provided at a teachers' college is of a two-year duration. The curriculum comprises the following components:

a) Professional course:
   i) Principles of education;
   ii) Educational psychology; and

b) General education course:
   i) Mother tongue, religion and health and physical education (this component is compulsory);
   ii) English, aesthetic education, agriculture, second language, home science, mathematics, science and social science (these are selectives).

A trainee should successfully complete a course of practical teaching at a school under the guidance of a supervisor.

The functions of teacher education and curriculum development are entrusted to the additional secretary so that there is closer co-operation and co-ordination between curriculum designers and the staff of teachers' colleges. The staff of teachers' colleges are represented on the Primary Education Curriculum Committee.

A programme of in-service training for primary school teachers was implemented when the integrated curriculum was introduced

in 1973. This programme involves the training of nearly 10,000 teachers per year as well as the orientation of school directors, circuit education officers and the staff of the regional education departments. The national training team at the Curriculum Development Centre train selected teachers and circuit education officers. These teachers and officers train other teachers at the circuit level by conducting five-day seminars. The programme provides the teachers with opportunities to acquire and develop new concepts and exchange experiences for their mutual benefit.

A newsletter containing new ideas and experiences in primary education is published by the Curriculum Development Centre. This document is published three times a year and is sent to all the primary schools in the country. Radio programmes and newspapers are also used to disseminate new concepts on primary education.

Curriculum development. Prior to 1972 the primary schools in Sri Lanka followed a traditional pattern using formal methods of teaching. The reforms introduced in that year changed both the content and methodology of the primary teaching programme. The reformers envisioned flexibility and freedom to enable the pupil to discover his/her own learning environment and to enable the teacher to creatively use the resources available to suit the needs of the learners. The objectives of the integrated primary education programme may be described as follows.

a) Learning to understand relationships and their implications rather than learning isolated facts;

b) Critical objective thinking in place of passive acceptance of others' opinions;

c) Flexibility and adaptability to meet the challenge of rapid change encountered in modern life;

d) Creativity in thought and action;

e) Self-reliance leading to self-respect;

f) Resourcefulness (to do the best possible job with the resources available);

g) Responsibility for social welfare and civic and social duties;

h) Respect for the inner worth of the individual;

i) Commitment to work, striving for excellence and quality;

j) Patriotism in the context of respect for other nations;

k) Fairness and impartiality in dealing with other people;

l) Ability to accept criticism; and

m) Respect for others' opinions.

The open and flexible approach in the school necessarily implies that the role of the teacher should change from the dominant authoritative figure to a 'facilitator of learning'. The teacher should help the children to undertake meaningful activities either singly or in groups. The artificial demarcation of subject barriers in the curriculum should give way to integrated study through a problem solving approach. Performance should be tested continuously throughout the year taking remedial action whenever necessary.

The subjects that form the components of the curriculum are first language; mathematics; environmental studies and science; creative and constructional activities; aesthetic activities and physical education; religion; and second language (beginning at grade III).

The teacher is expected to integrate the instructional material around eleven themes. These same themes are also pursued in the upper grades of the primary cycle. The themes are as follows:

(a) 'Our houses and the people who live in them'; (b) 'Things we eat and drink'; (c) 'Things we wear'; (d) 'Things which help us work'; (e) 'How we live in a mixed community'; (f) 'The world around us'; (g) 'Our school and the neighbourhood'; (h) 'People who help us'; (i) 'How we travel and communicate'; (j) 'Our earth and the sky above'; and (k) 'Things we see and hear'.

Though specific activities and time may be allocated for language and mathematical skills the integrated approach provides for meaningful applications and practice. Flexible time scheduling which frees the teacher from the usual 30- to 40-minute time blocks encourages independent exploration and learning by pupils.

Some positive results have been achieved, especially in the lower grades of the primary cycle. However, the results fall short of

expectations. Although the teachers are expected to integrate the instructional materials, the average teacher does not possess the required capacity to undertake such an exercise. Furthermore, when the age of admission to school was lowered to five and the kindergarten was introduced, grade I was 'extrapolated backwards' to provide experiences for socialization and exploration in the kindergarten. The expediency of such an approach is, however, questionable.[9]

Financing education

After the introduction of free education in 1945 and the takeover of assisted schools by the state system in 1961, the cost of education has been borne almost entirely by the state. Only 25 assisted schools and a few fee-levying schools opted out of the state system. The non-fee-levying private schools are now provided with a grant to meet the cost of salary payments to their teachers.

The Government's financial commitment to general education amounts to nearly 6 per cent of the total budget. Current expenditure on general education stands at 93.4 per cent of the total allocation provided for this segment of education. Salary payments to employees constitute nearly 88 per cent of the recurrent expenditure and teachers' salaries account for 96.5 per cent of the salary payments.

The school system consists of primary (grade 0-V), junior secondary (grade 0-X) and senior secondary schools (grade 0-XII or VI-XII). Both junior secondary and the large majority of the senior secondary schools have primary grades and the infrastructural facilities of these schools are available to the different cycles of general education. In some schools, especially the smaller ones, the same person teaches both primary and secondary grades. Allocations are provided for recurrent and capital expenditure but a breakdown of expenditure according to the level of education is not available.

Although a direct determination of expenditure on primary education is not possible, one has recourse to an indirect mode of calculation which would yield results that are approximate to reality.

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[9] Peiris, Kamala. *Educational Change at Primary Level in Sri Lanka.* Colombo, the author, 1981.

Expenditure on general education, (1975-1982)

	*Current prices (SRs)**	*1970 prices (SRs)*	*Percentage increase/decrease*
1975	659,099,563	382,277,740	
1976	865,795,126	476,187,310	+ 25
1977	894,465,329	411,454,040	– 14
1978	1,002,778,506	431,194,750	+ 5
1979	1,185,838,492	438,760,200	+ 2
1980	1,521,016,493	471,515,080	+ 7
1981	1,988,399,440	516,983,840	+ 10
1982	2,263,633,000	543,271,920	+ 5

Educational expenditure per pupil, 1975-1982

	1970 prices (SRs)	*Percentage increase/decrease*
1975	157.21	
1976	193.45	+ 23
1977	167.11	– 14
1978	144.20	– 14
1979	139.92	– 3
1980	143.72	+ 3
1981	153.42	+ 7
1982	159.87	+ 4

* Approximately 24.4 Sri Lanka rupees (SRs) = 1 US dollar.

The basis for such a calculation is found in the data collected from the annual school census which is conducted on 1 March of every year. The census schedules collected from nearly 9600 schools contain a table which gives a breakdown of teachers' salaries according to the level of education. A teacher's salary is divided (if necessary) into two levels according to the length of time spent by the teacher at each level. As teachers' salaries constitute 85 per cent of the recurrent expenditure on general education, reasoning suggests that a breakdown of the recurrent expenditure in proportion to salary payments to teachers in the different cycles would indicate the approximate recurrent expenditure by level of education. According to the census data collected from the schools, the salaries of teachers in primary and secondary education stand in the ratio of 1:1.43. Application to these ratios to the total recurrent expenditure of

1982 yields a figure of SRs 843,630,000 with respect to primary education. The recurrent unit costs of the different levels of education obtained by dividing the derived recurrent expenditure figures by the relevant enrolments are; Primary (K-V), SRs 400; and Secondary (VI-XII), SRs 938.

Curriculum diversification and employment of specialist teachers in the junior secondary and senior secondary levels are the two major factors contributing to the differences in the unit costs. While unit costs provide general indices of the magnitudes of expenditures, they fail to provide indices of quality. Quality of education is a function of the resources made available to the individual schools. Schools in the remote rural areas of the country have relatively poor facilities and the quality of education provided at a given level tends to be low in comparison with that of well-developed urban schools.

Education is free in all state schools and state-assisted private schools. Free textbooks are provided for all pupils in the primary and junior secondary grades of both government and private schools. Contributions made by community members and other voluntary organizations represent less than 5 per cent of the educational budget. Pupils voluntarily pay facility fees which vary from SRs 5 to 20 per pupil per term. Facility fees are used by school heads for improving library and sports facilities and for meeting other approved items of expenditure.

Construction of school buildings is financed from allocations provided in the estimates of the Ministry of Education and from funds provided in the decentralized budget. Funds in the decentralized budget are used on an electorate basis according to priorities determined by members of Parliament and regional directors of education. As mentioned earlier, buildings in junior and senior secondary schools are used to conduct classes in both primary and secondary grades and hence it is not possible to separately indicate the financial provisions for primary education.

In addition to infrastructural facilities provided by the Ministry of Education and the decentralized budgets, school development societies, parent-teacher associations and old boys/girls associations have constructed classroom blocks, assembly halls, library buildings and other similar structures to benefit the schools with which they

are associated. While voluntary bodies make a useful contribution towards infrastructural development, the voluntary nature of the contributions renders the pre-assessment of the magnitude of voluntary support very difficult when a construction plan with phased-out targets for the development of infrastructural facilities has to be prepared.

A recent innovation is the design and implementation of integrated rural development programmes with assistance from the World Bank and other agencies such as SIDA and NORAD. Under the education component of the integrated rural development programmes, classrooms have been constructed for both primary and secondary schools. In two districts of the country, the main thrust of the education component is the development of primary schools.

While educational expenditure has increased (both at current and constant prices) its share in the government budget has fallen from the peak figure observed in the 1960s. Per pupil expenditure (at constant prices) from 1977 to 1981 remained lower than in 1976 and the 1982 figure was only slightly higher than the 1981 figure.

Chapter Two

ACCESSIBILITY OF EDUCATION

The adoption of universal franchise in 1931 increased the momentum of forces seeking to accelerate the pace of development of the country towards the ideal of equality of opportunity. The demand for facilitating access to education led to the introduction of a series of reforms including the removal of inequalities in education. The introduction of free education and the adoption of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in all schools abolished the dual-school system characterized by the existence of English schools and Swabasha schools. The establishment of central schools in rural areas and the awarding of scholarships to bright pupils from the lower socio-economic strata, the recruitment of increasing numbers of teachers and the expansion of educational facilities at all levels resulted in phenomenal increases in pupil enrolments. Pupil enrolments increased from 1.4 million in 1950 to 2.7 million in 1970 and to 3.4 million in 1982. The greater part of this increase was in the primary level.

Adequacy and accessibility of education has to be measured in terms of number and location of schools, size of schools, school resources and curriculum. Location of a school within walking distance of a child's home is a factor that promotes school attendance. In Sri Lanka no child who has reached the age of school admission is refused admission to the school closest to his/her home unless the school is so overcrowded that alternative accommodation has to be found for him/her in another school which again is not far from home. The relatively high school density has greatly facilitated access to education. For the country as a whole there are four schools for every 30 sq km and among the districts this number varies from 1 to 22. The districts with low school densities are Vavuniya, Mullativu, Moneragala and Polonnaruwa.[10] However, in terms of the number of schools the first three of these districts have a larger number of schools than the national average of six per

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[10] *Needs of Children in Sri Lanka.* Colombo, Marga Institute, 1980. p. 246.

10,000 population. The districts with relatively low school densities tend to have relatively low population densities.

The country has a wide network of schools extending to the most remote parts of the country. However, parameters such as population density and transport facilities confer advantages associated with urbanization on some areas of the country. One of the effects of population density is reflected in school size which tends to be small in sparsely populated districts and regions. The district with the largest number of small schools is Kurunegala and the district with the largest percentage of small schools is Vavuniya. Other districts which have relatively large concentrations of small schools include Ratnapura, Bandarawela, Anuradhapura, Jaffna, Kandy, Nuwara Eliya and Galle.

There are 2249 schools or nearly 23.7 per cent of the schools in the country that fall into the category of small schools. There are 692 small schools having one teacher each and 798 schools having two teachers each. In other words nearly 66 per cent of the small schools have either one teacher or two teachers each. Enrolment is one of the factors taken into account in providing facilities and teaching staff personnel to schools. Adoption of a uniform pupil-teacher ratio as the basis for the recruitment and deployment of teachers often compels small schools to combine classes at different grade levels.

The number of pupils in a given school is reflected in the presence or absence of parallel classes in the different grade levels and in the class size. The prestigious schools in urban areas are multiform-entry schools where average class size is generally large. Small schools are single-form-entry schools with small pupil numbers at each grade level. The median values of class size by grade and district show that the highest median value for any grade in any district is 37 and the lowest median value is 9. Among the districts Colombo has the highest median value and Mullativu has the lowest. Both Mullativu and Vavuniya have median values below 16 indicating the existence of a relatively large number of small schools.

Small schools are generally located in the remote and uncongenial areas of the country where the social, economic and educational levels of the inhabitants are relatively low. The disadvantages associated with poor environments are reflected in the small schools

which have inadequate infrastructural facilities. Qualified teachers from the more favourable parts of the country are reluctant to serve in uncongenial stations and as a result small schools have a very high percentage of teachers whose competency levels are low. Due to low pupil enrolments the majority of the small schools have to continue as one-teacher or two-teacher schools. However, the teachers are not properly trained for multigraded teaching. Under such circumstances, the performance levels of the pupils are low.

A programme was launched in the 1970s with UNICEF assistance to ameliorate the conditions of small schools in the country. While some schools benefited from the assistance, it was generally not enough to meet even basic needs. The problems of the small schools cannot be solved by efforts confined to the schools alone as many of their problems have roots in the impoverished environments. Agency collaboration, community involvement and resource allocation are needed to solve the problems of the small schools.

Participation in education. In 1972 the age of admission was raised from five to six, thus reducing the number of new entrants to the lowest grade. With the resulting reduction in enrolments in the upper grades in subsequent years, the total primary enrolment from 1972 to 1977 remained lower than in 1971 (see Table 2). The number of primary pupils dropped from 1,786,502 in 1971 to 1,471,431 in 1972. From 1972 to 1977 the average percentage growth rate of the primary enrolment was 0.34. The age of admission to school was again lowered to five in 1978 and pupil numbers in the primary cycle rose from 1,492,147 in 1977 to 1,908,530 in 1978, registering a percentage increase of 27.9. From 1978 to 1982 the primary enrolment increased at an average percentage growth rate of 2.6. For the period 1971 to 1981 the average percentage growth rate of primary enrolment remained at 1.9.

The country has a value system which abhors any kind of discrimination on the basis of sex. The general attitude of the community towards the education of females is reflected in the enrolments and the facilities available for education. The large majority of the schools (96.3 per cent) are mixed institutions where boys and girls learn together as brothers and sisters. The ratio of males to females in the primary cycle was 1.1:1 in 1975. The ratio improved slightly (in favour of females) to 1.07:1 in 1981. The ratio of males

to females in the 5 to 11 age-group is 1.4:1, indicating a slightly higher participation rate for the males. The females in the primary cycle as a percentage of the total primary enrolment do not vary markedly in the different districts of the country. Forty-eight per cent of the primary enrolment of the country consists of females and among the districts this percentage rises to 49.5. It is significant to note that districts such as Mannar and Batticaloa with large concentrations of Muslims have percentage values very close to the national average. There is little difference between urban and rural areas in the percentage of females in primary education. This is primarily attributable to the equality of values attached by parents to the education of their daughters whether they reside in urban or rural localities.

The primary cycle comprises six grades (K-V) and the age-group corresponding to this cycle is 5 to 11. The population in this age-group was 2,333,522 in 1971. The 5 to 11 age-group increased at an average annual rate of 0.18 per cent from 1971 to 1981. Population data from 1971 to 1981 and the projected population of 1990 and 1995 are presented in Table 1. The percentage growth from 1963 to 1971 was 2.01 and according to projections the population in the 5 to 11 age-group would grow from 1981 to 1990 at an average rate of 1.6 per cent. The lower growth rate observed from 1971 to 1981 is primarily attributable to a decline in fertility during this period.

Due to grade repetition the primary pupil enrolment is greater than the 5 to 11 school age-group as some of the pupils in the upper primary grades are older than 11. Some of the children in the 5 to 11 age-group who are not attending school today would enter school later. The enrolment ratio obtained by dividing the primary enrolment by the primary school age population is not an age-specific enrolment ratio. If repetition is ignored, this ratio may be viewed as consisting of two components. one indicating the age-specific enrolment ratio and the other reflecting the effect of late entry on participation. The success of the measures taken by the state to democratize primary education may be partially measured in terms of changes in enrolment ratios for the whole country and the districts from 1971 to 1981.

The enrolment ratio of the primary school age-group was 71.8 in 1971 and moved upward throughout the period to reach

the value of 90.0 in 1981. The enrolment ratios of the different districts of the country in 1981 are shown in Table 4. The highest ratio (94.9) is recorded for Matale and the lowest ratio (77.9) for Mullativu. There are 10 districts that have ratios above the national average of 90.0.

The age of admission to school is five. However, many children enter school at an older age and in consequence the age composition of pupils in the lowest grade of the school system shows a spread between five and eight (a small percentage is over eight years). Eighty-seven per cent of the new entrants to the lowest grade are in the 5 to 6 age-group. An age specific enrolment ratio for the 5 to 6 age-group may be derived by dividing the 5 to 6 year-old entrants to kindergarten (the lowest grade) by the population in the age-group 5 to 6. The enrolment ratio of 5 to 6 year-old males in the country is 83.6 and that of females in the same age-group is 83.7. Relatively low ratios are generally observed in districts with low population densities. In the thinly populated districts of the country the school density tends to be low and children in these districts have to walk greater distances to attend school than children in the other parts of the country. This is one of the reasons for the relatively low participation of the 5 to 6 age-group in such districts.

Admission of children to government schools is characterized by the absence of discrimination on the basis of race, religion or sex. Unlike many countries of the developing world, the female in Sri Lanka has not experienced discrimination in education. Although males slightly outnumber females in primary education, a slight female dominance is observed in the higher grades. The ratio of females to males changes from 1:1.07 in the primary cycle to 1.03:1 in the junior secondary cycle and to 1.37:1 in the senior secondary cycle.

Grade repetition. Repetition rates are sometimes used as indices of internal efficiency since grade repetition leads to an increase in the number of pupil years needed for completing a given cycle of education. Repetition can be reduced by implementation of appropriate curricula, adoption of suitable instructional practices, remedial instruction for slow-learners, remedial treatment for children suffering from mental and physical handicaps and creation of conditions conducive to effective teaching-learning.

Generally, the repetition rates rise from kindergarten to grade III and thereafter a downward trend is observed. The districts of Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara have relatively low repetition rates and high rates are observed in the districts of Batticaloa, Nuwara Eliya, Tangalle, Mullativu and Trincomalee. According to instructions issued by the Ministry repetition is allowed in grades X and XII to enable pupils to take the public examinations for the second time, if necessary. However, the Ministry has refrained from taking a definitive stance in relation to repetition in the other grades. Some schools adhere to a policy of automatic promotion, while the others only promote those pupils who reach a satisfactory performance level. Repetition is almost non-existent in the non-examination grades of the prestigious schools of the country which are patronized by well-to-do parents.

Some of the causes of grade repetition are rooted in the socio-economic milieu of pupils. However, the relatively high percentage of repeaters in the lowest grade of the primary cycle in the districts of Nuwara Eliya and Mullativu (where the percentage of repeaters exceeds 15) is rather disturbing. Why should such relatively large percentages of pupils repeat? The argument for keeping some pupils in the same grade is based on the assumption that pupils who have failed to acquire the required skills and competencies in a given grade would, if promoted to the next grade, find it increasingly difficult to attain a satisfactory or acceptable performance level. Whatever the merits of this argument, the fact remains that in the large majority of schools the repeaters are exposed to an additional instructional programme, if necessary. The negative effect of repeating a grade may hasten premature leaving, especially in the case of those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Drop-outs from the primary cycle. Dropping-out is a phenomenon produced by a complex of factors. Two studies conducted in recent years bring into focus the multiple causes of dropping-out.[11] The causes for dropping-out may be summarized as follows:

a) The low income and educational level of parents;

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11 Phillip, U.S. *et al.* National *Study on Meeting the Needs of Young People Without Schooling or With Incomplete Schooling.* Colombo, Ministry of Education, 1981.

Haputhantri, S. A *Report on A Survey of Non School-Going Children and Students Who Drop Out of School at an Early Stage in Sri Lanka.* Colombo, UNICEF, 1979.

b) The low level of aspiration of parents and their children;

c) The lack of school facilities and easy access to secondary education in particular areas;

d) Poor school performance and grade repetition; and

e) Large family size (The effect of low income on dropping-out is augmented when the family size is large. Generally, the elder children tend to drop-out).

Numbers dropping-out from kindergarten (the lowest grade level) are generally very low and the drop-out rates applicable to kindergarten are negligible in many districts of the country. The drop-out rates are generally higher at the upper levels than at the lower levels of the primary cycle. The numbers dropping-out from the primary grades amount to 3.7 per cent of the total primary enrolment. The Colombo district has the lowest percentage of drop-outs while Nuwara Eliya has the highest. In many districts the drop-out rates progressively rise from the lower to upper grades. In some areas of the country, secondary school facilities are not available within easy access of pupils and dropping-out during transfer from the primary to the secondary cycle is one of the causes of the relatively high percentage of drop-outs observed at grade V. Nearly 29 per cent of all pupils entering at the lowest grade fail to successfully complete the primary cycle.

Repetition increases the number of pupil-years required for the completion of the primary cycle and dropping-out reduces the final output of the cycle. The effect of repetition and dropping-out is to increase (in terms of pupil-years) the cost of production of a graduate of the primary cycle. The number of pupil-years taken for the production of a graduate of the primary cycle in the different districts of the country is highlighted in a study made in 1982.[12] Under the rates of promotion and repetition prevailing in 1971, the average number of pupil-years taken for the production of a primary school graduate is 9.57. If the repetition rates and promotion rates relevant to 1981 are used for the determination of the number of graduates and pupil-years, the average number of pupil-years needed for producing one primary school graduate is 8.93.

12 Gunaratne, D. and Nawaratnarajah, S. *Inter-District Comparisons of Indices of Educational Performance.* Colombo, Ministry of Education, 1982.

In 1971 only 57.6 per cent of all pupils originating in the lowest grade of the primary cycle would ultimately complete the cycle, whereas in 1981 70.4 per cent of all pupils would graduate from the same cycle. In the absence of repetition and dropping-out the number of pupil-years required per pupil for completing the primary cycle is six. It is evident that the internal efficiency of the system, as measured by the number of pupil-years required per primary school graduate, has improved from 1971 to 1981.

Non-participation, late entry, grade repetition, irregular attendance and dropping-out are manifestations of interrelated forces originating in a disadvantaged background. Many parents in the low income brackets prefer to have their children at home to attend to domestic chores while they themselves go out to work or to have the children work to supplement the family income. Cultural and educational backwardness of parents tends to create a home atmosphere which discourages children from attending school. There is a close relationship between school participation and the social class to which a pupil belongs. Dropping-out cannot be eliminated by school-based efforts alone; nor can the formal system be of any use to those who would never enter it.

Although all the schools in the country have the same curricula, they do not have the same facilities. The lowest stratum consists of poor ill-equipped schools located in the urban slums, remote villages and in areas with a large plantation sector. These schools have relatively high drop-out rates and the performance levels of their pupils in literacy and numeracy are low. The formal school system with its strong academic bias eliminates those who fail to satisfy pre-determined performance criteria. This process hastens the dropping-out of those from the lower social strata. Many of the early drop-outs lapse into illiteracy.

Disadvantaged sections of the population

Slow learners and handicapped children. According to a survey conducted in 1981 nearly 15 per cent of the primary school population falls into the category of slow-learners.[13] The majority of them have failed to reach the minimum required standard in the three

[13] Piyasena, K. *Slow Learners in Our Primary Schools.* Colombo, Ministry of Education, 1981.

basic skills: reading, writing and mathematics. It is these slow learners who receive the least attention at school. The causes of slow-learning may include lack of motivation for learning; unstimulating school environment; low intelligence; emotional disturbance or maladjustment; absenteeism or irregular attendance; defective hearing/vision; malnutrition; and chronic health problems.

Poor health is an important factor contributing to poor attendance, poor school performance and dropping-out from school. The common health problems prevalent among school children in Sri Lanka include malnutrition; respiratory diseases; bowel diseases and worm infections; skin infections; poor vision and eye defects (vitamin A deficiency is prevalent among 2 per cent of the population); hearing defects; and dental disease.

Most of the above-mentioned health problems are preventable. Respiratory diseases, bowel diseases and skin infections are caused mainly by poor environmental health. Blindness is mostly due to the lack of vitamin A and many congenital defects could be corrected if detected during the early years.

Although free health services are provided in Sri Lanka through a wide network of hospitals and peripheral units, the Ministry of Health has not been able to provide all primary school children with regular medical inspections and treatment owing to the lack of sufficient medical personnel.

As a result of this situation, a programme was formulated jointly by the Ministries of Health and Education with the following objectives in view:

a) Training of school teachers to screen children for defects;

b) Referring children who are identified as having defects to clinics in government hospitals for treatment and follow-up action;

c) Imparting health education to children and the community; and

d) Improving environmental sanitation in schools.

Under this programme, which is currently in operation in two districts, one or two teachers from each school are trained to screen

children with health problems. The training classes are conducted jointly by the Ministries of Health and Education. The officials of both these Ministries, operating within a given area, are briefed together so that there is better co-ordination in the implementation of the programme. School directors are also invited to participate in the training programme. The teachers are trained to identify malnourished children by maintaining growth charts. Whenever possible the midday meal is supplemented with food assistance received from the community.

Teachers devote about one hour a day to examine children and identify those with poor vision, defective hearing and other handicaps. Such children are either referred to government clinics or they are sent to camps organized for further screening and testing. If there are numerous children with a particular handicap, a camp is organized to treat them with the assistance of voluntary medical personnel and non-governmental organizations.

The programme will eventually be extended to all the other districts of the country.

Plantation-sector schools. Schools in the plantation sector are historically disadvantaged. During the greater part of their existence they have remained in relative isolation. During the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, South Indian immigrant labour flowed into the country to work on the tea and rubber plantations. The immigrant workers residing on the estates providing cheap labour to the British planters. The changes which occurred in the mainstream of national life did not significantly improve the lot of the estate labourers as they remained isolated from the surrounding villages.

The Education Ordinances of 1907 and 1920 provided for the compulsory education of children of labourers resident on the estates. The superintendent of an estate was required to provide facilities for the education of children between the ages of six and ten and to appoint competent teachers. The Education Ordinance of 1947 raised the upper age limit of compulsory education to 14. The estate schools were periodically inspected by the Director of Education and they were financially supported by a government grant. In spite of the obligations imposed by law on the estate

management, the educational facilities in the estate schools remained poor.

The curriculum of the estate schools consisted of reading, writing, mathematics, speech, games and drill. Girls were taught needlework whenever possible. The highest grade in an estate school was V and many children left school before completing this grade. Some children completed grade V and then gained admission to urban schools where they received their secondary education.

Although the plantation workers have linguistic, ethnic and religious affinities with the indigenous Tamils of Sri Lanka, they have evolved into a distinct ethnic group exhibiting the characteristics of a disadvantaged, exploited community similar to that of the villagers in the central highlands of the country. The present educational problems of the estate population are the consequence of a process that has occurred during a period of several decades. Specific causes may be summarized as follows:

a) The infrastructural facilities available for education are poor and inadequate;

b) The majority of the teachers are unqualified and professionally incompetent;

c) The qualified teachers working in the estate schools have come from the non-plantation sectors and they have no abiding interest in the plantation-sector schools;

d) Facilities available for education beyond the primary grade are negligible; and

e) The drop-out rates are relatively high.

The recent absorption of the estate schools into the national system of education has paved the way for designing and implementing a development plan aimed at preparing the estate population for active participation in the social life of the country. Nevertheless, the solution to problems facing the estate schools is difficult owing to socio-economic constraints. Recruitment of qualified personnel of 'estate-origin' to fill vacancies in the estate schools is difficult. Furthermore, the provision of necessary infrastructure would require heavy expenditure.

A new branch has been established in the Ministry of Education to assess the needs of plantation-sector schools and co-operate with the regional education departments in implementing programmes for the educational development of these schools. The following measures have been taken to improve the conditions of estate schools:

a) Initiation of steps to establish a special fund to provide financial allocations for the development of estate schools;

b) Recruitment of 400 teachers for the estate schools and initiation of steps to recruit 1000 more;

c) Inclusion of estate schools in the education component of the integrated rural development projects of districts which have a large plantation sector;

d) Provision of an allocation in the estimates of the Ministry of Education for the improvement of infrastructural facilities of estate schools; and

e) Initiation of a scheme to award scholarships to talented children in the estate sector.

The Ministry of Education has to maintain a balance in the provision of resources for the different parts of the country. The disadvantaged schools in the remote rural areas of the country have most of the same problems as the plantation-sector schools. Teachers' salaries account for nearly 85 per cent of the recurrent budget and recurrent expenditure inclusive of salary payments amounts to nearly 93 per cent of the total educational expenditure. Funds available for the improvement of disadvantaged schools, whether they be in the estate or the rural sector, are limited.

Public expenditure on primary education. In Sri Lanka primary education is provided in the primary schools and in the primary sections of secondary schools. In fact the majority of the schools with primary grades are secondary schools. There is no clear demarcation between institutions providing primary and secondary education and this fact is reflected in the accounting system. In other words, accounts are not separately maintained for primary and secondary education. Thus a breakdown of current and capital expenditures for primary education is not possible. As indicated

in Chapter One the approximate expenditure on primary education can be derived but a breakdown of this expenditure into capital and recurrent components is neither possible nor meaningful in a situation where the same buildings are used for both primary and secondary education. Furthermore, the administrative and supervisory personnel provide their services for both primary and secondary education and any attempt to divide the expenditure for their services into components corresponding to primary and secondary education would amount to a theoretical exercise far removed from reality. For this reason no attempt is made in the present study to indicate the expenditures on such inputs as administration, supervision, school buildings and equipment for primary education.

Table 1. Population in 5 to 11 age-group corresponding to primary education level in the national system

Year	*Age-group population (5 to 11)*	*Average annual percentage growth rate*
1971	2,333,522	
1981	2,375,699	0.18
Projections		
1990	2,741,580	1.60
1995	2,796,852	0.40

Source: Figures for 1971 and 1981 are derived from population tables published by the Department of Census and Statistics and those for 1990 and 1995 are derived from projections made by the Ministry of Plan Implementation.

Table 2. Trends in primary education

R = Rural F = Female
U = Urban M = Male

Year	*No. of schools with primary grades*	*No. of enrolled pupils in primary education*			*No. of teachers in primary education*	
	Total	*R*	*U*	*Total*		*Total*
1971[a/]	8,158			1,676,051		
1975[a/]	8,573	F 487,774	158,377	646,171		
		M 544,803	176,886	721,689		
1981	9,210	F 817,523	210,228	1,027,751	F	44,339
		M 881,398	226,261	1,107,659	M	19,176
1982	9,238	F 822,070	212,250	1,034,320		
		M 882,554	228,013	1,110,567		

Source: School Census – 1971, 1975, 1981 and 1982 (Ministry of Education).

Note: The fall in enrolment in 1975 is due to the raising of the age of admission from 5+ to 6+ years in 1972. The age of admission was again lowered to 5+ in 1978

[a/] Government schools only.

Table 3A. Primary enrolment by grade and sex, 1981

Grade	*Sex*	
	Male	*Female*
Kindergarten	184,246	174,071
I	198,171	185,395
II	189,057	172,645
III	191,675	173,818
IV	187,626	174,398
V	156,884	147,424
Total	1,107,659	1,027,751

Source: School Census – 1981 (Ministry of Education).

Table 3B. Primary enrolment by age and sex, 1981

Age	*Sex*	
	Male	*Female*
5–6	147,118	142,990
6–7	160,076	153,316
7–8	159,378	151,369
8–9	164,641	157,026
9–10	166,414	158,117
10–11	157,265	149,206
Total	954,892	912,024

Source: School Census – 1981 (Ministry of Education).

Table 4. Geographical distribution of primary school age population and primary enrolments, 1981

Region/ Provinces	*Total population of primary education age-group*	*No. of schools with primary grades*	*No. of pupils enrolled in primary grades*	*Enrolment ratio*
Colombo	235,150	440	213,553	90.8
Gampaha	202,338	540	179,903	88.9
Kalutara	126,442	450	111,399	88.1
Kandy	180,399	725	164,959	91.4
Matale	58,337	297	55,357	94.9
Nuwara Eliya	82,049	377	64,750	78.9
Galle	127,823	490	117,656	92.0
Matara	106,574	368	98,352	92.3
Tangalle	72,553	256	67,851	93.5
Jaffna	135,577	539	120,247	88.7
Mannar	17,856	100	15,783	88.4
Mullativu	13,116	83	10,220	77.9
Vavuniya	17,866	127	14,805	82.9
Batticaloa	64,752	243	51,382	79.4
Ampara	72,728	268	65,382	89.9
Trincomalee	47,599	202	44,892	94.3

Table 4. *(continued)*

Region/ Provinces	*Total population of primary education age-group*	*No. of schools with primary grades*	*No. of pupils enrolled in primary grades*	*Enrolment ratio*
Kurunegala	193,926	905	181,843	93.8
Puttalam	81,413	314	73,295	90.0
Anuradhapura	102,167	505	94,652	92.6
Polonnaruwa	43,395	148	39,250	89.2
Bandarawela	109,861	502	96,025	87.4
Moneragala	49,182	182	42,849	87.1
Ratnapura	127,616	567	114,375	89.6
Kegalle	106,980	582	96,630	90.3
Total	2,375,699	9,210	2,135,410	90.0

Source: School Census – 1981 (Ministry of Education).
Census of Population – 1981 (Department of Census and Statistics).

Table 5. Institutions of primary education

Type of Institution	*Year*			
	1982	*1980*	*1975*	*1970*
Total primary schools/schools with primary grades	9,172	8,735	8,277	8,130
Of which number of one-teacher schools	692			
Of which number of two-teacher schools	798			
No. of teacher training institutions for primary education	17	13	23[a]	20[a]
No. of in-service training Institutions[b]				
Curriculum Development Centre	1	1	1	1
Schools for physically handicapped	13	12		
Schools for mentally handicapped	12	10		

Source: School Census – 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1982 (Ministry of Education).

a/ These institutions provided training for both primary and post-primary teachers.

b/ Presently there is no pre-service teacher-training. The teacher training institutions provide training for teachers in service.

Table 6. Teachers and supervisors for primary education, 1981

Level of basic qualification	*Teachers for Primary Education – number*			*No. of*
	Trained	*Untrained*	*Total*	*Supervisors*
Less than 10 year schooling	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
10-12 year schooling	50725	12790	63515	9202
University degree	–	–	–	–

Source: School Census – 1981 (Ministry of Education).

Table 7. Curriculum in primary schools, 1983

Number of working days for primary schools in a year: 181

Number of hours per week: K – grade II 20 hours
grade III – V 30 hours

Subject/Activity	*Grades*					
	K	*I*	*II*	*III*	*IV*	*V*
	hours	*hours*	*hours*	*hours*	*hours*	*hours*
Mother tongue (Reading, writing, speech, environment, religion)	8½	8½	8½	14	14	14
Mathematics	5	5	5	5½	5½	5½
Aesthetic activities (dancing, music, drama)	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½
Creative activities (handicraft, art, drawing, cutting etc.)	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½
Physical activities (sports)	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½	1½
Recreational activities	2	2	2	2	2	1½
Second Language (English)	–	–	–	4	4	4½
Total hours	20	20	20	30	30	30

Source: Ministry of Education.

Chapter Three

NATIONAL POLICY AND PLAN FOR UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

Elements of national policy. Sri Lanka views education as a fundamental right of every individual. The acceptance of this view by every political party in the country is a manifestation of the importance which the country as a whole attaches to democratization of education. The pre-eminent position given to education in the country's value system has led to the enshrinement of the principle of universalization of education in the country's constitution which is the fundamental law of the land.

Provision of a legal basis for compulsory education, expansion of educational facilities and enforcement of compulsory attendance requirements are different dimensions of an endeavour to bring education within reach of all individuals. This multi-dimensional approach was adopted in the past to achieve the ideal of universal education. However, experience has clearly demonstrated that neither the expansion of facilities or the enforcement of compulsory attendance was sufficient to achieve universalization. Utilization of educational facilities is a function of the socio-economic status of the people and their attitudes. Improvement of socio-economic conditions would lead to a higher rate of participation. Similarly, expansion and improvement of facilities would increase participation only if the other factors which contribute to such participation change in a positive direction. As the rate of participation rises, more resources are needed to bring about a further rise.

Present efforts toward UPE cannot be accomplished without considering the particular circumstances of disadvantaged groups. Legal compulsion to enforce attendance at school would only add to the misery of parents who in their present situation find it difficult to send their children to formal educational institutions. While steps are being taken to further improve the formal system, alternative structures should be developed to benefit school drop-outs.

The origin of UPE can be traced to the British period when vernacular schools were established to provide primary education for the majority of the people. Although the British policy sought to provide an education for the masses, it was not concerned with equalization of educational opportunities. In fact the British encouraged missionaries to establish English-speaking schools to cater to the needs of the elitist groups within the country. Thus, there were well-equipped English-speaking schools drawing their pupils from the affluent stratum of society coexisting with ill-equipped Swabasha schools patronized by the majority of the people. This dualism persisted for decades even though the line of demarcation between the two categories became blurred after the introduction of the free education scheme and the adoption of mother tongue as the medium of instruction in all schools. The persistence of the dualism was partly due to the fact that there remained a system of dual management which provided for both state-run schools and a network of assisted schools managed by denominational bodies. A unified system of national schools came into existence with the takeover of assisted schools in 1960. This reinforced to a considerable extent the national effort towards equalization of educational opportunities.

As mentioned in Chapter One primary education was made compulsory under the Education Ordinances of 1907 and 1920. Penalties were imposed on parents who failed to send their children to school. The Education Ordinance of 1939 contained provisions for requiring education between specified age limits. Although there were no regulations enforcing compulsory attendance, the by-laws passed under the earlier Ordinances remained in force. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed a phenomenonal expansion of the educational system and a rapid rise in participation. During this period the legal requirement to attend school was de-emphasized and compulsory attendance by-laws were disregarded. However, non-enforcement of compulsory attendance should not be interpreted as an indication of relaxation of the national commitment to UPE. Strategies for UPE include the awarding of scholarships to talented children of poor parents, provision of free textbooks to all pupils in both state schools or private schools, the development of alternative structures such as literacy centres to benefit children who in present circumstances cannot benefit from the formal system and democratization of educational opportunities through school zoning and school clusters.

Provision of incentives. Participation in education is determined not only by the educational opportunities that are provided but also by the degree to which such opportunities are used. Provision of a wide network of schools is no guarantee that educational opportunities are within the reach of the intended target group. It has been observed that socio-economic factors keep a certain proportion of children of school-going age away from school. Several measures have been adopted by the state to reduce the cost of education to parents and to induce them to send their children to school.

A system is now in operation for the provision of free textbooks to all pupils who are in primary and junior secondary grades in both government and private schools. Textbooks provided for the different grades are as follows:

K–grade II:	Religion and mother tongue (Sinhala/Tamil)
grades III–V:	Religion, mother tongue (Sinhala/Tamil), mathematics and English
grades VI–VIII:	Religion, mother tongue (Sinhala/Tamil), English, mathematics, science and social studies
grades IX–X:	Religion, mother tongue (Sinhala/Tamil), mathematics, English, science, social studies, commerce and literature

The supply of free textbooks has contributed to increased retention of pupils within the system. The fact that the books were supplied to all pupils without considering the financial capacity of parents prevented a social stratification of pupils within the school.

Provision of free 'snacks' to all children in the lower grades of the primary cycle of selected schools in another positive measure taken to provide some degree of relief to the more economically depressed. The free mid-day meal programme is implemented in collaboration with the CARE.

Scholarships enable talented pupils from disadvantaged homes to continue education in better-equipped secondary schools. Children in the last grade of the primary cycle who perform well at the scholarship examination are entitled to financial assistance from the state if the income levels of their parents are low. The possibility

of winning a scholarship for the continuation of education at the secondary level encourages primary pupils to stay at school and take the grade V scholarship examination.

Enrichment of the primary curriculum. Nearly 30 per cent of the pupils who enter the school system leave before completing the primary cycle. One of the reasons for the failure of the system to retain all pupils until completion of the primary cycle is the fact that the curriculum and the instructional methodologies often fail to stimulate and sustain interest. The promotion of activity-based methods, particularly through environmental studies and creative activities, is a major objective of quality improvement in primary education. The Ministry seeks to improve pupil performance through specialized primary teacher training, curriculum revision, textbook writing and the development of a minimum learning continuum. Assessment of pupil performance will be part of the teaching activity.

The decision taken by the Ministry to deploy graduate teachers in the primary grades is part of a system of innovations aimed at improving the quality of primary education.

The open school. The Ministry is committed to a policy of expansion of non-formal education based on the philosophy of continuing and recurrent education. Implementation of a proposal contained in *Education Proposals for Reform* will lead to the establishment of an island-wide network of open schools.[14] The open school will provide a variety of courses including personal enrichment courses, vocational courses and courses facilitating re-entry into the formal education system. The drop-outs from the formal system and the disadvantaged who have never gone to school will be offered opportunities for further development. Different types of non-formal education programmes will be offered using the facilities of a cluster of schools. One important function of the open school will be to function as a support centre for the large majority who leave school to enter the world of work.

School zoning and rationalization of the school network. A main weakness of past strategies was the emphasis placed on the development of individual schools in the endeavour to democratize educational opportunities. Development of a network of schools to meet the educational needs of identified geographical areas received

14 *Education Proposals for Reform*. Colombo, Ministry of Education, 1981.

little or no attention. A plan is being prepared by the Ministry of Education that will divide each district in the country into a number of school zones and develop a school network to meet the primary and secondary educational needs of the population of each zone. Each school zone would consist of 10-20 schools. Previously neglected areas within the zones will be identified for the purpose of locating primary schools. While primary and junior secondary educational facilities will be provided within easy access of children of primary and junior secondary school age, two or more zones may share the facilities of the same school for the provision of senior secondary educational facilities if the pupil numbers do not justify the maintenance of separate schools and if the distances involved in travelling are not too long. The rationalization plan also provides for the amalgamation and phasing-out of particular schools, depending on their locations and enrolments.

One of the objectives of the school zoning and rationalization plan is UPE. School facilities will be used to benefit as large a proportion as possible of the school-age population. Regional education authorities will prepare a three-year rolling plan for the educational development of each zone taking into consideration the likely enrolments in each cycle of education. The zoning plans will be integrated into a three-year rolling plan for the educational development of the whole district/region.

The rolling plan will probably be unable to meet all the needs of the zones and the district within the three-year period. As the plan rolls forward by one year, another year will be added to meet requirements not included in the original three-year span. Each zone and each district will also have an annual plan based on the three-year plan. Funds for the implementation of the district educational development plan will mainly come from the Ministry of Education and the district development councils.

School clusters. The existence of a wide network of schools is not sufficient to bring about equalization of educational opportunities. Inadequancies in infrastructure and resources such as buildings, equipment and teachers, as well as environmental factors and the lack of a will to transform ideas into programmes of activity, have left a large number of schools less developed than others.

In order to overcome such deficiencies and to achieve a meaningful degree of rationalization in the use of resources, a reform

proposal to establish school clusters will be implemented in stages. Schools within a defined geographical area or zone will be grouped into a cluster. Each cluster will function as an administrative entity for the purpose of planning the allocation of resources to cater to the needs of the student population within a geographically defined area. Details of this programme and a description of experiences from a pilot project are presented in Chapter Four.

School clusters will operate at the grass-roots level through the participation of local administrators, heads of schools, teachers, students and parents. It is expected to function as a system which would unite primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools and create favourable conditions for mutual collaboration. It should help to eliminate unhealthy competition among individual schools and heads of schools, and ensure that pupils of poorly-equipped schools in a remote or suburban locality have access to better facilities. The core-school or the most developed school in the group will provide leadership in organizing the curricular activities on a cluster basis.

The conducive environment created in the teaching-learning situation as a result of the cluster system is expected to have an impact on the efficiency of the overall system leading to increased enrolment, retention and transition rates, particularly at the primary level. Based on the identification of problems at the cluster level, remedial measures are to be adopted to meet specific needs of the school-going population. A united effort at cluster level is likely to have a significant effect on universalization of educational opportunities at all levels.

Reduction of educational waste. The statistical analysis presented in Chapter Two indicates that Sri Lanka has not yet achieved UPE although the country's progress compares well with many others in the Asian region. The non-schooling gap is produced by premature school-leaving and by the fact that some children never come to school.

A survey conducted in 1979 centred on the causes of dropping-out. The survey findings clearly demonstrate that the main factors contributing to dropping-out are socio-economic. Dropping-out cannot be completely eliminated by curriculum development and instructional improvement. However, the proportion of drop-outs can be reduced by creating a more favourable school environment.

Dropping-out, whatever its causes, must be viewed as a waste of resources from the point of view of internal efficiency. It is also an indication of the considerable number of pupils who leave the system without completing the primary cycle. Strategies are being developed to reduce the number of drop-outs and bring the school-age population not attending school within the sphere of non-formal programmes.

As a result of the recent re-organization of the regional departments of education a number of projects were introduced for the educational development of the pupils. One of the projects is concerned with the reduction of the number of drop-outs. Each regional department has selected one or more geographical areas within the district/region for an in-depth study of the area-specific causes of dropping-out. An effort has been made to establish a dialogue with the parents. The homes of children identified as potential drop-outs are visited for the purpose of obtaining first-hand information and mobilizing efforts for improving the conditions in which they live.

Girls' education. In both urban and rural areas of the country girls are equal to boys in educational opportunity. Even in districts with relatively large concentrations of Muslims, the difference between male and female enrolment ratios is negligible. As female participation compares very favourably with that of males, it is unnecessary to have recourse to any strategy for achieving a higher female enrolment ratio.

Education in remote and isolated areas. Reduction and elimination of disparities between regions in the distribution of educational facilities is a cornerstone of government policy. Positive discrimination in favour of disadvantaged localities has contributed to reduction of both inter-district and intra-district disparities. However, school facilities available in thinly populated areas of the country remain inadequate and some children cannot attend school because the nearest school is not located within walking distance and transportation is limited. It is extremely uneconomical to establish schools in remote, sparsely-populated localities as school facilities would be grossly underutilized. Already the country has a large number of small schools with low utilization rates both in terms of teachers and overall space. In order to keep education within manageable limits and at the same time bring education within reach of

children in remote thinly-populated areas, it may be necessary to move away from the traditional school model. Experience with literacy centres strongly suggests that non-formal schooling is likely to succeed where formal instructional methodologies fail.

Implications of UPE in terms of teacher supply and facilities

Although legal provision exists for making education compulsory, regulations specifying the age limits have not been framed under existing Ordinances. The rapid educational expansion witnessed in the 1950s and 1960s and the keen sensitivity of parents to the educational needs of their children have brought about a relatively high participation in education. It is generally accepted that education between the ages of 5 and 14 should be compulsory for all boys and girls. Today 85 per cent of the population in this age-group attend school.

The age-group corresponding to the six-year primary cycle (grades K-V) is 5 to 11. The projected population in 1990 for this age-group is 2,742,000. Universalization does not imply universal non-repetition In the Sri Lankan context, repetition is likely to continue even after attaining universalization, and the primary enrolment would therefore be greater than the 5 to 11 year-old population.

The primary enrolment in 1982 is nearly 2,145,000 and the average annual increase in the primary pupil population is approximately 45,000. If the present trend continues, the primary enrolment in 1990 will be 2,505,000. This figure is less than the projected primary school population in 1990 by 237,000. The resources required for coping with the enrolment increases depend on whether the increases are due to trend-continuation or to planned action to achieve universalization. To simplify the calculation of financial requirements, it is assumed that the effect of grade repetition on the size of the primary school population is negligible.

Construction of additional classrooms needed may be phased over a six-year period beginning in 1984, with a view to reducing the annual financial burden. Similarly the recruitement of teachers can be phased on the basis of the annual enrolment increases. The phasing of recruitment will have very little or no effect on the final increase in recurrent expenditure. Funds needed for the provision of teachers and classrooms are shown below.

	If present trends continue	*If universalization is achieved by 1990*
Additional teachers	9,000	15,700
Additional classrooms	7,875	13,800
Salary for additional teachers	SRs 78,300,000	Srs 136,590,000
Total expenditure on additional buildings – six year period	SRs 393,750,000	Srs 690,000,000
Annual expenditure on additional buildings	SRs 62,625,000	Srs 115,000,000
Per cent increase in annual recurrent expenditure	4.0%	6.7%
Per cent increase in annual capital expenditure	38.4%	67.6%

Primary enrolments in non-state schools amount to nearly 1.5 per cent of the total primary enrolment in the country. As the expenditure is proportional to enrolment, the state will have to bear 98.5 per cent of the financial burden indicated.

If present trends continue, enrolments in the primary grades will increase to 2,505,000 and the enrolment ratio will rise to 91.4 by 1990. This is slightly higher than the present enrolment ratio which is 90.0.

The difference between the projected primary enrolment and projected primary school-age population in 1990 is 237,000. As mentioned previously this gap would consist of both drop-outs and those who never enter the formal system. The drop-outs will not return to the formal system as long as the conditions which cause premature leaving persist. Those who have never gone to school even when facilities were readily available are also unlikely to participate in formal education. The Ministry of Education has therefore organized literacy centres to meet the needs of school drop-outs and non-participants. Currently these centres cater to the needs of several age-groups including adolescents.

Experience with literacy centres has convinced the Ministry that the needs of drop-outs and non-participants can best be served by flexible time scheduling which would permit pupils to arrive and

depart at times convenient to them and by organizing instructional programmes specially suited to the needs of disadvantaged groups. Such programmes should be flexible in terms of content and hours of instruction per week. Instructional sessions should be held in the morning or afternoon and during week-days or week-ends.

For reasons already indicated, the non-schooling gap must be eliminated not only by expanding formal instructional programmes but also by introducing new modalities outside the formal system and by expanding existing non-formal programmes. With regard to UPE the following strategies may be adopted:

a) Expansion of the literacy centre programme to include all the electorates of the country;

b) Establishment of institutions similar to the literacy centres in the remote areas of the country to exclusively serve the educational needs of children of primary school-age, using the resources available in the village temple, community centres and other similar entities or organizations;

c) Establishment of a programme at one of the existing teachers' colleges (or at a specialized institution) for training voluntary workers to teach primary school-age children attending literacy centres and similar institutions;

d) Initiation of a UNICEF-assisted 'awareness-creation' programme for sensitizing parents to the need for primary education.

The present number of primary teachers is 62,319 and according to the present attrition rates the system is likely to annually lose about 1,100 primary teachers. The average annual increase in primary enrolment is about 45,000 and the number of teachers needed for this enrolment increase is about 1,300. Therefore the system needs to annually recruit 2,400 primary teachers. The number of primary teachers to be trained is equal to the number of new recruits and the backlog of untrained teachers. The number of untrained primary teachers is nearly 13,000. The existing primary teacher training instituions annually admit about 1,000 trainees to their programmes and a further 1,600 trainees are admitted to the postal training programme. The number of teachers that must be recruited is only slightly less than the total number of trainees

admitted to the institutional and postal training programmes. As the backlog of untrained teachers could persist for a long time, alternative strategies and modalities have been implemented for training teachers. As pre-service training is to be introduced the present capacities of the existing teacher-training institutions have to be increased to accommodate the new recruits and non-institutionalized programmes have to be expanded and further developed to clear the existing backlog of untrained teachers. Currently action is being taken to develop eight teachers' colleges to provide pre-service training facilities.

As the present system of training is one of in-service training and sufficient numbers of persons with the requisite qualifications are available in the labour market, recruitment of the required number of primary teachers does not present any major difficulty if funds are available. However, the question of in-service training has to be carefully considered, especially in view of the fact that the Ministry has already taken steps to introduce a system of pre-service training.

In addition to the existing institutional and postal training courses, the Ministry has formulated a plan to provide a non-residential two- to three- year course for training teachers for elementary education, i.e., the first eight grades of the school system. The course content will be similar to the content of the present primary course with suitable additions and modifications to cover the grades not included in the primary cycle. Training classes and contact sessions will be conducted at 40 centres to be established on a district basis during week-ends and school vacations. The tutorial staff of a training centre will mostly include lecturers of teachers' colleges. Initially 1,500 will be admitted to the centres and later this number will be increased to 2,000.

The combined capacity of the training centres and a correspondence course will enable the Ministry to clear the existing backlog of untrained teachers in about four years.

Conclusion. Although Sri Lanka has achieved a high level of participation in primary education, the country is likely to progress toward universalisation rather slowly.

Participation in education is a function of a multiplicity of factors and the mere provision of teachers and classrooms is unlikely

to significantly affect the enrolment ratio. Many children in disadvantaged environments do not attend school even when facilities are available within easy reach. Strategies for improved participation must take into consideration both the needs of deprived localities and the need to optimize the use of available resources.

In order to bring about conditions conducive to UPE it is necessary to have recourse to a gamut of strategies such as the use of formal and non-formal systems both for teacher training and imparting of instruction, involvement of voluntary workers and mobilization of community resources, establishment of linkages between the formal and non-formal systems, adoption of correspondence education methodologies to augment the supply of trained teachers and involvement of voluntary workers in non-formal programmes designed to help primary school-age children who do not benefit from the formal system.

The policy objectives underlying the present efforts and the strategies employed for achieving UPE may be summarized as follows:

a) Reduction of inter-district and intra-district disparities to bring about democratization of education;

b) Positive discrimination in providing facilities to bring education within reach of disadvantaged groups;

c) Enrichment of the primary curriculum to provide stimulating experiences for growing minds;

d) Enhancement of the internal efficiency of the system through reduction of repetition and drop-out rates;

e) Rationalization of the school network to optimize the use of resources in the endeavour to provide equal educational opportunities;

f) Development of formal and non-formal programmes with cross linkages to facilitate the flow of pupils between the two systems;

g) Employment of non-formal modalities to meet the educational needs of school drop-outs and non-participants;

h) Development of management capabilities for principals of schools to increase the efficiency of the system;

i) Provision of incentives to retain the school-age population within the school system; and

j) Integration of educational and rural development activities at the grass-roots level.

For more than fifty years Sri Lanka has consistently adhered to a policy of democratization of education. Implementation of this policy has resulted in a relatively high level of participation. However, the country has to progress further to achieve UPE. Improvement of socio-economic conditions, especially in the disadvantaged localities; improvement and further expansion of the school network within the formal system; and the adoption of alternative structures for the education of those who have not benefited from the formal system will hasten the process of universalization.

Chapter Four

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

From 1978 to 1980 a number of committees studied and reported on general technical, higher education and vocational/apprenticeship training. The reports of these committees provided the basis for the preparation of a White Paper on Education which was presented in Parliament in August 1981. The White Paper proposals, which were debated and discussed in Parliament and at public forums, will determine to a great extent the course of educational development in the years to come. Most of the significant developments that have either taken place or are on the horizon owe their origins to implementation of some of the White Paper proposals or initiation of steps to create conditions necessary for implementation of the White Paper proposals. Some of the significant developments that have a bearing on primary education are briefly described in the following.

Development of management capabilities for principals of schools. The problems of management which manifest themselves at the school level are attributable to deficiencies in planning, programming and implementation. The failure on the part of a principal to conceive and operationalize the school as an organizational and planning entity perhaps arises from the fact that he has not been adequately trained to organize and supervise the educational processes within the school.

The Staff College, which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, formerly provided courses of training for directors of education, chief education officers, education officers, circuit education officers and principals of schools. Due to resource limitations the College was able to help only a small percentage of principals. Further follow-up action after training was minimal and no systematic impact evaluation was undertaken. After the establishment of the Management Training Centre in early 1983, the Staff College was relieved of its responsibility for training directors of education, chief education officers and education officers. The

College now concentrates most of its resources and time on the provision of courses of training for principals of schools.

A recent innovation designed to improve the management capabilities of principals of medium-sized schools is the introduction of a plan to provide on-the-job training. The trainers are experienced principals who have been specially trained in planning and management. Each of them functions as a principal of a large school and also visits 10 to 15 selected schools for the purpose of assisting the heads of these schools to run their institutions as efficient managers. As the trainer-principal and the trainee-principal are both heads of schools, the trainer is more acceptable as a consultant to the trainee than an officer from the District Department of Education. In addition to discussing problems and offering solutions during visits, in-service training courses are also organized to discuss action paths for overcoming diagnosed common weaknesses in school management.

All schools have been required since 1982 to implement a school development plan. Objectives of the pupil-development projects which are being implemented under this plan are the reduction of grade repetition and premature dropping-out, reduction of pupil absenteeism, provision of remedial classroom instruction, detection of physical disabilities with appropriate remedial treatment and provision of midday meals to undernourished children. Progress reports on projects are regularly forwarded to the Regional Education Department through circuit education officers. The school development plan is being closely monitored by the Ministry of Education.

School clusters. A rational deployment of resources to maintain equitable standards in the provision of education in all parts of the country is preferred to a system in which schools fiercely compete for the limited resources of the state and the patronage of affluent parents and thereby increase the resource imbalance between the few large schools and the many small schools.[15]

Education Proposals for Reform introduced the concept of the school cluster as a means to accomplish the following:

a) Reduce the existing inequities in the provision of educational facilities;

15 *Education Proposals for Reform.* Colombo, Ministry of Education, 1981.

b) Enable schools to be managed by more competent personnel, recognizing the key role of the head of the school; and

c) Facilitate even the smallest schools to belong to a group whose collective resources would permit the provision of expensive facilities and services to all schools within the group and thereby induce all parents, both rich and poor, to rely on their local schools for the education of their children.[16]

A plan prepared by the Ministry envisages the grouping of schools in a defined geographical area to form a 'cluster' for the purpose of better organization and management, leading to more efficient utilization of resources both at the state and community level. The cluster of schools will function as an administrative entity to meet the educational needs of the entire area it serves.

The present focus of planning and development of facilities is the individual school. This has resulted in unhealthy competition among schools for facilities and has led to irrational allocation of resources. The cluster system is an attempt to shift the focus from the individual school to a group of schools within a defined geographical area serving as a planning unit at the grass-roots level. Such a system will minimize unnecessary duplication and resource waste through rationalization and optimum utilization of teacher resources and physical facilities. It will lead to better supervision of the schools as well as quality improvement in smaller schools, the majority of which have only primary grades.

Each cluster will comprise a number of primary schools and a few secondary schools. The largest secondary school in a cluster will be designated the core school. The principal of the core school will function as executive head of the cluster, i.e., cluster principal. Each school cluster will have a Board of Principals consisting of the cluster principal as chairman and principals of the member schools.

The Board of Principals will perform the following functions:

a) Plan the allocation of resources on a priority basis to meet

16 *Education Proposals for Reform.* Colombo, Ministry of Education, 1981. p 9.

the needs of the member schools and thus eliminate unhealthy competition for limited resources;

b) Plan and implement measures to improve the teaching/learning environment and teaching methodology by co-operative efforts within the cluster enabling exchange of experiences and creating an atmosphere where teachers could help each other in the different schools. Such an environment encourages creativity and innovative ideas to suit local conditions;

c) Foster greater community participation in the activities organized at the cluster level;

d) Plan non-formal education on a cluster basis so that out-of-school education activities can be organized in collaboration with the Non-Formal Education Branch of the Ministry of Education, voluntary organizations and the local administration; and

e) Organize co-curricular activities on a cluster basis so that neglected schools and small primary schools benefit as members of the cluster.

The Ministry commenced implementation of the cluster system on an experimental basis in 1981. By mid-March 1983, 21 pilot school clusters were in operation. It involved 240 schools in 10 educational regions. 222 of the 240 schools were either primary schools or junior secondary schools with primary grades.

The leadership qualities of the cluster principal and the positive attitude of teachers toward change and innovation contribute to the successful operation of the clusters. The pilot project indicates that the school clusters have a great potential to develop as rational planning and administrative units for the effective harnessing and deployment of resources available within a community. The project will be modified and improved in the light of experience before being adopted on an island-wide scale.

School zones. The education circuits into which a district is divided for the purpose of administration has the following disadvantages from the standpoint of educational development:

a) The geographical area covered by a circuit is too large to permit effective school planning and supervision; and

b) Accurate population data applicable to a circuit are not obtainable (the geographical unit used for the conduct of the population census is the Grama Sevake division).

In order to provide a more meaningful basis for educational planning and school supervision, the present education circuits will be replaced with school zones in 1984. As a school zone will consist of two or more Grama Sevaka divisions, it will be relatively easy to obtain accurate data on the school-age population. It will then be possible to assess the magnitude of the present and future demand for primary and secondary education.

The guidelines prepared by the Ministry for the demarcation of school zones were sent to six regional directors of education who used the guidelines for establishing school zones in their districts on an experimental basis. The Ministry revised the guidelines taking into consideration the observations made by the regional directors. The revised guidelines have been forwarded to all the regional directors of education who were expected to complete the demarcation of school zones in their districts before the end of 1983.

Each school zone will consist of 10 to 20 schools and will have a three-year rolling plan for the educational development of the zone. A school zone differs from a school cluster in that the schools in a zone retain their separate identities, though they form the components of a rationalized network. The school zone may be regarded as an intermediate stage in the development of the school cluster.

Multi-zone management and supervision. The purpose of demarcation of school zones is to create a school network within defined geographical areas. Administration and management of a large number of school zones by a single district department of education would fail to yield positive results. A mediating agency must be established between the school zones and the district education department to provide an organizational arrangement for effective management and supervision.

In order to provide the required organization for multi-zone management, education offices will be established in each district.

The number of education offices to be established under a district department of education will depend on the area of the district, population size, number of schools and enrolment. Each education office will generally cover 10 school zones or 120 to 150 schools. In January 1984 education offices will be established in three districts on a pilot basis with a view to extending the system to other districts by the beginning of 1985.

The inadequacy of transport facilities available to the district education departments makes the task of effective supervision of schools, especially the remote schools, difficult. Effective linkages cannot be forged between school-level planning and district-level planning. The education office will be in a better position to develop meaningful linkages with the schools and the school zones and thereby bring school-level and zone-level planning and programming activities within a framework of supervision that would facilitate the effective management of intra-zonal operations and inter-zonal relations.

The envisaged organizational set-up, with a separate division for school development, will identify specific problem areas for concentrated action in planning, plan implementation, monitoring and review. The supervisory activities will be directed towards appraisal and streamlining of delivery of educational services to schools.

National assessments of education progress. A study on the achievement of primary pupils has brought into focus the poor performance of pupils in reading and mathematics.[17] While marked disparities were observed among individual schools and between urban and rural schools, the performance level of the average and below average schools was particularly poor. Concern has prompted the Ministry of Education to search for appropriate means to reverse the trend. Curriculum revision, textbook writing, primary teacher training and suitable assessment procedures offer possibilities of performance improvement.

A special unit established at the Ministry is presently engaged in developing a minimum learning continuum (MLC) in language and

17 Kariyawasam, T. and Wanasinghe, J. *Achievement of Primary Level Students of Sri Lanka in Reading and Mathematics.* Colombo, Ministry of Education, Department of Educational Publications, 1982.

mathematics. MLC assessment seeks to measure the performance of groups in relation to a specified objective. It is concerned with the determination of a national level of performance in a particular subject area. The assessment programme aims at measuring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes possessed by Sri Lankan pupils in the different grades of the primary cycle and measuring the changes (growth or decline) in their educational attainments during a specific period of time.

The goals of national assessment include the following:

a) Assessment of the current position and reporting on changes in the educational attainment of primary school children in language and mathematics;

b) Reporting on assessment findings in language and mathematics in the context of other variables such as educational and social conditions;

c) Dissemination of findings to the general public;

d) Advancement of assessment technology through on-going programme research and operation studies;

e) Reporting on long-term trends with regard to the attainment of primary school children in language and mathematics; and

f) Reporting on the curriculum changes necessary in language and mathematics at the primary level.

The items to be used for assessment will be written by a team of specialist teachers or educators in the area being assessed. These items will be reviewed by scholars and educators. Most of the items will be of the multiple-choice type, but many open-ended or free-response items will be included to assess the creativity of pupils. Sets of items varying in difficulty will be developed in order to assess what pupils of a given age know and can do.

Literacy centres. In 1981 the Ministry of Education conducted a survey of the school-age population not attending school. The survey findings are used to assess the number of young persons who form the non-schooling gap, their geographical distribution, their present position and their needs and aspirations. The survey reveals

that the problems of illiteracy are particularly high among children in the urban slums and in the plantation sector. These children cannot be brought back to the formal system as it functions today. They currently help their parents to look after younger members of the family or are engaged in various activities which help supplement the family income. Many of them are exploited by unscrupulous elements. There appears to be a causal relationship between illiteracy and juvenile delinquency. Almost all the children brought before the juvenile courts in Colombo are from the slums and more than 75 per cent of them are illiterate.

It is against such a background that the Ministry initiated action to design and develop an alternative structure to enable non-school-going children to commence or resume learning under a system which is less rigid and less formal than the school system which is characterized by instructional and assessment methodologies that perform the function of selecting able pupils and eliminating those who fail to measure up to pre-determined standards. It is therefore critically important to evolve curriculum which takes into consideration the specific needs and interests of children and adolescents and the handicaps experienced by them in their disadvantaged environments. With a view to meeting the needs of children and teenagers without schooling or with incomplete schooling the Ministry of Education launched the literacy centres project in the second half of 1981. The objectives of the project are:

a) To develop a parallel structure having links with the formal system to provide needs-based learning experiences; and

b) To provide educational opportunities to non-school-going children in the 5 to 10, 11 to 14 and 14 + age-groups.

Eleven literacy centres were established in 1981 and today there are 60. A literacy centre is generally located in a school, a community centre or a temple. Each centre is run by an experienced teacher who is paid a special allowance by the Ministry. Adult education officers attached to the regional education departments exercise supervision over the centres. Adult education officers are also responsible for selecting suitable locations for establishing new centres. They work in close co-operation with voluntary organizations operating in the district. They visit the homes of non-school-going children

to ascertain their needs and to motivate their parents to participate in the project.

Children attending a centre belong to different age groups. Their educational level varies from the ability to read a simple sentence to total illiteracy. The children at a centre are divided into three groups: 5 to 10, 11 to 14 and 14+. The staff consists of one or two teachers who are assisted by a few volunteers. The instructional modules for the 5 to 10 and 11 to 14 age-groups include lessons developed around basic needs, creative and recreational activities and life skills.

Illiterate teenagers in the 14+ group cannot gain admission to vocational training courses because of their illiteracy and their inability to make simple calculations. At literacy centres the instructional modules seek to develop the literacy, numeracy and vocational skills of this group.

Classes are conducted at the literacy centres in the afternoon and/or evening, three days a week. Attendance at a centre does not interfere with the income-earning activities of children who are presently engaged in such activities. The times of arrival and departure are not rigidly fixed. The flexible time scheduling, the informal atmosphere pervading the centres, the sympathetic understanding shown by teachers and volunteers, the nutritional supplements and recreational facilities provided are the main attractions which bring the disadvantaged children to the literacy centres.

A significant feature of the literacy project is multiagency participation. The Department of Social Services supplies cream-powdered milk to all children. The Health Department, through its local staff, assists the teachers to conduct medical examinations of children. The Department of Probation and Child Care has initiated action to attach a probation officer to each of the centres in the city of Colombo. This is a sequel to an experiment which is being implemented in collaboration with the juvenile court to divert delinquents and displaced children to literacy centres. Records are maintained of all children referred to the Ministry of Education by the juvenile court. Of the total number of children referred to the Ministry since August 1981, 48 had never attended school, 27 had lapsed into illiteracy and 18 could read and understand a simple sentence. All the children have entered literacy centres in Colombo.

The literacy centres project is still in a pilot stage. The details of implementation are worked out by the non-formal education division of the Ministry which also maintains directional supervision over the project activities in the districts. The immediate supervision over a centre is exercised by the Adult Education Officer of the Electorate in which the centre is situated. It is yet too early to evaluate the impact of the project. However, the dedication shown by the implementors at the different levels, the collaboration extended by a number of agencies and the positive response of the clients themselves may be construed as elements of incipient success.

Quality improvement in primary education. In designing curriculum for the different levels of the school system planners are faced with the necessity of reconciling the different views of educators, parents and politicians. Hence within the broad framework of national objectives it becomes necessary to establish objectives for each level of education and for each subject in the curriculum. The Curriculum Committee on Primary Education designs the broad-based national-level curriculum for the primary cycle. Specifications formulated by the Committee are elaborated into detailed curriculum guides which provide for appropriate variations and adaptations at the district level. A proposal to decentralize curriculum development work is now being studied by the Ministry. It is envisaged that the districts will be able to establish their own curriculum development units to adapt and expand the curriculum designed and developed at the national level.

Integrated rural development projects (IRDPs) are being implemented in a number of districts with assistance from The World Bank and donor agencies such as SIDA and NORAD. The education component of an IRDP focuses on the educational development of the area selected. The education component of the Badulla District Integrated Rural Development Project (BIRDP) depicts a trend towards decentralization of curriculum development to meet local needs. The guidelines, which were formulated by the Ministry for the preparation of the education component, were in keeping with the national policy on education. The following areas were critically examined by the Project Formulation Committee established to prepare the education component of BIRD: (a) curriculum design, resource materials and implementation; (b) teacher education and training; (c) remedial teaching; (d) classroom supervision and evaluation; (e) special education for the handicapped; (f) non-formal

education and vocational training; (g) non-enrolment, absenteeism, repetition and dropping-out; (h) guidance and counselling; (i) environmental sanitation; (j) health and nutrition; (k) community participation; (l) provision of infrastructural facilities; and (m) organization systems, management practices and general supervision programmes.[18]

The majority of children in the Badulla District participate in elementary education only. Elementary education (grades I-VIII) and often only a few grades of primary education (grades I-V) are the only education experienced. A majority of such children find employment early in life in the plantation sector. Therefore vocational and non-formal education offer a supplementary educational experience.

Lack of syllabi and course guides, lack of proper understanding of the integrated curriculum at the primary level by untrained and inexperienced teachers, inadequate resource books and supplementary reading material for children, inexperience and lack of skills in multi-grade teaching necessary in small schools where there is only one teacher, insufficient emphasis on skill-building subjects in order that integrated teaching may be undertaken successfully, lack of understanding and maintenance of records in assessing a pupil's performance, lack of special provision for remedial teaching for the disadvantaged and challenging material for the gifted children, lack of curriculum materials and specific training in primary science and aesthetic studies including physical education, lack of materials and equipment for teaching at the primary level, high level of incidence of malnutrition and lack of proper staff supervision due to lack of prerequisite skills and knowledge of classroom practices are some of the problems and constraints which are expected to be overcome by curriculum development and orientation of personnel at the district level.

The education component of BIRDP comprises a number of programmes designed to meet the needs specified above. The focus of all these programmes is the quality improvement of primary education in Badulla District.

The education component of BIRDP signifies a new approach to regional educational development. Unlike other IRDPs, the

18 *Badulla Integrated Rural Development Project.* Colombo, Ministry of Education, 1983.

education component of BIRDP views the provision of infrastructural facilities as subservient to quality improvement.

The implementation of programmes included in the education component of BIRDP will be closely watched by the Ministry and the experience gained will be used for the formulation of future regional plans and programmes aimed at bringing quality primary education within the reach of all concerned.

National Institute of Education. In pursuance of the policy of decentralization of educational administration, regional departments of education will take the initiative in adapting national policies to suit the particular needs of the districts. Curriculum development, teacher education and evaluation activities will be planned and implemented at the district level. District-level officers must be prepared for their new roles. A large network of district-based training centres is therefore required to meet the personnel training needs of the district departments.

Post-graduate training of educational personnel will be the responsibility of the Ministry. Post-graduate education programmes to be designed to meet the needs of the educational system should have relevance to current problems and priority projects.

Co-ordination of activities at the national and district levels and the need for periodic review of training systems has prompted the Ministry to formulate a proposal for establishing a National Institute of Education to:

a) Monitor and undertake research and development activities at the national level directed towards the improvement of performance of the general education system;

b) Identify priority problems and recommend appropriate remedial action;

c) Evaluate the impact of the curriculum and undertake research and development activities to improve classroom materials, evaluation techniques and school practices;

d) Identify the training needs of different categories of educational personnel and design and implement appropriate training programmes;

e) Monitor the performance of the personnel training and development programmes and establish specifications and standards for certification;

f) Develop educational technology and improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching by exploiting the potentialities of new media;

g) Provide information services to those involved in educational policy-making and development activities through the publication and dissemination of findings of educational surveys and research; and

h) Provide a consultancy service to other agencies involved in educational activities.

The proposed Institute will keep the general education system under surveillance, formulate recommendations for meeting national needs and co-ordinate the educational development and staff-training activities of the Ministry.

Use of a computer facility for data processing and progress control. On 1 March of each year, the Ministry conducts a school census to collect data from nearly 10,000 educational institutions including private schools and Pirivenas. The data include medium of instruction; age, grade and sex of pupils; qualifications, age and sex of teachers; grade repeaters by medium of instruction; infrastructural facilities available; results of public examinations; fees collected; contributions made by voluntary organizations; and other related matters. The data collected are manually processed and 40 statistical tables are prepared by the Statistics Unit. The data processing is time-consuming and up-to-date processed data are often not readily available for decision-making. Some tables are unable to be prepared due to time requirements. A case in point is the non-preparation of a table showing the distribution of pupils by grade and age. In order to eliminate the delay involved in processing school census data, arrangements have been made to use the computer facility of the Department of Examinations for the processing and analysis of educational data. Under this arrangement data collected from the 1983 school census are now being computer-processed.

Although the educational administration is decentralized, decision-making at the Ministry level has to be based on analysis of

problems and appraisal of performance of the district education departments and the agencies that come under them. The efficient monitoring of progress on a large number of projects implemented at district and sub-district levels is a very difficult task. Two computer system analysts and a computer programme manager will be recruited to serve the Progress Control Unit of the Ministry. The Ministry will be linked to the Examination Department's computer through on-line and off-line terminals which will be used for both feeding and retrieving data. The terminals will be installed in 1984 at the new premises of the Ministry.

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  Training of educational personnel for integrated curriculum; report. 1984.

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* Out of stock.

The Asian Programme of Educational Innovation for Development (APEID) has as its primary goal to contribute to the building of national capabilities for undertaking educational innovations linked to the problems of national development, thereby improving the quality of life of the people in the Member States.

All projects and activities within the framework of APEID are designed, developed and implemented co-operatively by the participating Member States through over one hundred national centres which they have associated for this purpose with APEID.

The 24 Member States participating in APEID are Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Turkey.

Each country has set up a National Development Group (NDG) to identify and support educational innovations for development within the country and facilitate exchange between countries.

The Asian Centre of Educational Innovation for Development (ACEID), an integral part of the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, co-ordinates the activities under APEID and assists the Associated Centres (AC) in carrying them out.

The eight programme areas under which the APEID activities are organized during the third cycle (1982-1986) are:

1. Universalization of education: access to education at first level by both formal and non-formal means;
2. Education for promotion of scientific and technological competence and creativity;
3. Education and work;
4. Education and rural development;
5. Education and urban development;
6. Educational technology with stress on mass media and low-cost instructional materials;
7. Professional support services and training of educational personnel;
8. Co-operative studies, reflections and research related to educational development and future orientations.